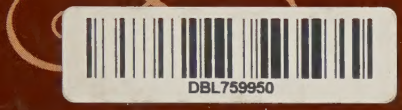
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Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

by

Iain Adamson

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A. SAQIB

HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD OF QADIAN

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

by
Iain Adamson

Elite International Publications Limited

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

The Messiah, promised for the world in all the great religions had arrived! He was to unite all religions and all mankind.

Today millions of people follow his teachings. In just 100 years the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has become the world's fastest – growing religious organisation.

The Promised Messiah revealed that Jesus did not die on the Cross. He also discovered his tomb.

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I would also like to record my appreciation of the help of Mr B.A. Rafiq, formerly Imam of The London Mosque, for his patience and kindness in providing me with much documentation and information during our many meetings over the years.

By the same author

The Old Fox

A life of Gilbert Beyfus, Q.C.

A Man of Quality

A life of Mr Justice Cassells

The Great Detective

A life of
Deputy Commander Reginald Spooner of Scotland Yard

HISTORY

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CONTENTS

		Page
INTRODUCTION	The Promise Made by God	xi
CHAPTER ONE	The Taking of the Covenant	1
CHAPTER TWO	Celestial Signs	7
CHAPTER THREE	Chieftains of Qadian	13
CHAPTER FOUR	Legal Battles	17
CHAPTER FIVE	Islam in Decline	31
CHAPTER SIX	Defender of the Faith	35
CHAPTER SEVEN	Columns of Spiritual Light	43
CHAPTER EIGHT	A Treasury of Truth	51
CHAPTER NINE	Revelations of the Future	55
CHAPTER TEN	Forty Days of Solitude	59
CHAPTER ELEVEN	Where Did Jesus Die?	65
CHAPTER TWELVE	An Enemy of God	73
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	A Christian Confrontation	79
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	Good News for Truth Seekers	85
CHAPTER FIFTEEN	The Wrath of God	93
CHAPTER SIXTEEN	A Charge of Murder	103
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN	The Bishop Retreats	113
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN	Revelations Regarding Sikhism	119
CHAPTER NINETEEN	The Bonds are Forged	125
CHAPTER TWENTY	Humility, Love and Courage	129
CHAPTER TWENTY ONE	The Value of Prayer	137
CHAPTER TWENTY TWO	Family Life	143
CHAPTER TWENTY THREE	The White Minaret	149
CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR	Islam looks to the West	155
CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE	The First Martyrs	159
CHAPTER TWENTY SIX	The Resurgence of Islam	165
CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN	Prophet of God	171
INDEX		181

INTRODUCTION

The Promise Made by God

Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of God, declared that after him would come The Promised Messiah. Among his tasks was the revival of Islam, the conversion of the world and the unification of all religions.

In the year 1889 in a small, dusty Indian town in the Punjab, some 90 miles from Lahore, a devout Muslim, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, accepted a covenant of allegiance from his first followers. A year later he announced that God had revealed to him that Jesus had died a normal death. God had also told him that he was The Promised Messiah.

God had promised him that his mission would be successful, he declared. God had told him, "I will carry thy message to the ends of the world". It was an astonishing statement from a man whose followers at that time did not even number fifty. Yet he was not unknown. His writings had attracted attention throughout the world. "Very profound and very true," the Russian philosopher Count Leo Tolstoy wrote of one of his books.

Today the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is considered the most potent religious force in the world. The first forty followers have become more than 10 million. It is a mathematical increase in 100 years unequalled since the rise of Islam.

Among his followers are a Nobel prizewinner, a former president of the General Assembly of the United Nations, government ministers, army and air force generals, doctors,

scientists, millionaires and millions and millions of ordinary people from countries as diverse as Indonesia, the United States, Poland, China and Spain.

An immense missionary organisation has established the Ahmadiyya Movement in 120 countries. The Holy Quran, or major portions of it, has been translated and printed in 117 languages, including Chinese and Russian.

In Third World countries, along with the missionaries, have come schools and hospitals, doctors and agricultural engineers. Each Ahmadi considers himself a missionary and ready to leave his home in Europe, North America, Pakistan and India to answer the call of the successors of The Promised Messiah and serve where the need is considered to be the greatest.

In the centenary year of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam this biography celebrates the life, revelations, prophecies and miracles of The Promised Messiah, including his discovery of the tomb of Jesus in Kashmir. It is drawn from the writings of The Promised Messiah, documents of the time and the testimony of The Promised Messiah's original 313 Companions. The biography also examines the interpretation of the Quran prophesying the coming of The Promised Messiah and the opinions of Islamic scholars down through the centuries.

CHAPTER ONE

The Taking of the Covenant

In the town people were early astir. His arrival had brought people in from outlying villages, eager to see him. Some shouting and jeering whenever he went out, others staring silently. In the teahouses, and in the shadow of the houses in the afternoon, they argued about what he said and what he was said to have said. Some argued violently, like those who shouted.

Others questioned. What was it that he said that was wrong, they asked.

His followers were discreet. Their clothes were unremarkable. There was nothing to distinguish them from the townsfolk. They avoided arguments about their beliefs. Only when their leader went to pray at the mosque did some of the younger men form a phalanx to deter anyone who wanted to jostle or insult him.

Today he sat alone in his room. Outside, in the corridors of the house and even out in the street, his followers waited. Then the first man entered and closed the door behind him. He was the former physician to a maharajah, a scholar of repute who liked to discuss the works of Shakespeare which he had read in Arabic translations.

In that bare room Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who was soon to proclaim that he was The Promised Messiah, sat on the floor on a scrap of carpet. The former physician was the first to make the covenant. He stretched forth his right hand and Ahmad leaned forward and grasped the physician's hand in

his own right hand. Then Ahmad put his left hand under his right elbow in order to support it – an accident in childhood had left his right arm weak.

"I repent today at the hands of Ahmad of all my sins" vowed the physician. When he had repeated the rest of the covenant Ahmad lifted up his hands in prayer and the physician did the same. When the prayer was finished the ceremony was complete.

On that day 40 people followed the physician, one by one. Then they came in groups. That first covenant was made on March 23rd, 1889. One hundred years later the Holy War of words to unite all religions under his prophethood and to convert the whole world peacefully to his Islamic beliefs has suffered many martyrs.

In the last century they were tortured and then stoned to death. In this century they have been hacked to death by enraged mobs. Governments, especially in Pakistan, have passed laws against them. They have been told – by both Christians and Muslims – that they are heretics. But the missionary zeal of the Ahmadiyya Movement has never faltered.

The swearing of the first covenant did not mean a break with other Muslims or confrontation with the Christian church. But a year later Ahmad proclaimed that he was The Promised Messiah and so the Apostle of God for all people and for all religions. Ahmad also proclaimed that God had revealed to him that Jesus did not die on the Cross. He had died a natural death in India many years later. It was a total repudiation of the beliefs of the Christian church and of nearly all of Islam.

God had revealed to him, said Ahmad, that Jesus had only fainted when he was on the Cross. When he was taken down, he was rubbed with ointments and salves and then laid quietly in a large, airy tomb dug out of the hillside. There he had gradually recovered. Three days later he had shown himself to

his disciples as they had described and doubting Thomas had put his hands into his wounds.

Then Jesus did disappear from Jerusalem. But he did not ascend into Heaven as the Son of God, as Christians declared. Nor did he ascend into Heaven as a prophet, who was to come back to Earth before the Day of Judgement in his original physical form, as Muslims declared.

Ahmad declared that God had revealed to him that Jesus, aware that he could no longer continue his ministrations in Galilee, had journeyed to India in search of the lost tribes of Israel. There he had lived a long and honourable life. He had died a natural death and his grave in Kashmir was known and honoured as that of the Prophet Yuz Asaph which translates as Jesus The Gatherer.

The Revelation by God to Ahmad that he was to wage a holy war of words to convert the world to Islam was all embracing. In that revelation God had told him that his followers were the chosen people. They would excel in every way every other person in the world.

This was the Revelation:

"God desires to found a community of the faithful to manifest His Glory and Power. He will make the Community grow and prosper to establish the love of God, righteousness, purity, piety, peace and goodwill among men. This shall be a group of persons devoted to God. He shall strengthen them with His own spirit and bless and purify them."

The Revelation also revealed to Ahmad that his community would flourish. God had promised, he said, that the Community would "multiply exceedingly".

"Thousands of truthful people shall join his ranks. He shall himself look after them and make the Community grow, so much so that its members and progress shall amaze the world."

Ahmad took the first covenant of allegiance from his followers in the town of Ludhiana in the Punjab, in the north-west of the Indian sub-continent. At that time Ludhiana had some 20,000 inhabitants. It was to become an important railway junction, but 100 years ago it was a town unknown to the rest of the world and even to most Indians. Yet Ahmad declared that the missionary movement he was founding there would spread throughout the world.

"The Community shall be a lighthouse so high as to illuminate the four corners of the world. The members thereof shall serve as models of Islamic blessings."

His followers, Ahmad emphasised, were the chosen people. "My true followers shall excel every other person. They shall always rise among them, till Judgement Day, personages who will be chosen ones of God in every way."

And Ahmad ended ringingly, "So had the Almighty decreed. He does as He wills."

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a man of striking appearance. He was tall, around 5 ft 8 inches with a black beard which, when he was only 30, was already streaked with silver and, by the time he was 50, had turned completely white. His eyes were dark and his eyelids always seemed to be half lowered.

His voice and manner were always exceedingly mild, but in later years, one of his followers remembered his reaction to news that his opponents were trying to arrange a legal case late on a Saturday so that he could be taken off to gaol over the weekend without the possibility of an appeal or the payment of a fine.

"Will they persecute The Lion of God?" cried Ahmad in a mighty voice.

It was not that he was concerned about his own character, but rather about the insult to God. Indeed, when there was a conspiracy to charge him with the attempted murder of a Christian missionary Ahmad shrugged off the allegations made against him. When the alleged assassin revealed that

he had been coached in his "confession" by the missionary himself the magistrate threw the case out of court.

He told Ahmad that if he wished to sue the missionary for perjury and malicious prosecution then the court would grant him leave to do so.

"I shall not do so. His case will come before a higher tribunal," said Ahmad.

Other opponents were not so fortunate. When one of them forecast his death Ahmad declared that he himself would not die as prophesied, but unfortunately his accuser would die a horrible death.

His prophecy proved to be correct.

CHAPTER TWO

Celestial Signs

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born on February 13th, 1835, the second son of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza. He was a twin, but his sister died a few days after their birth. His birth was a period of rejoicing for the family for at that time financial adversity also ended for the family. Five villages, part of the family estate confiscated when the Sikhs took power in the Punjab, were restored to them.

It was also the time forecast by tradition for the coming of The Promised Messiah. There was general agreement among Muslims that The Mahdi, which translates in English as "The Guided One", would appear at the beginning of the 14th century of the Hegira, which corresponds roughly to the last decade of the 19th century of the Christian calendar. Jesus had also indicated that the time of second coming would be signalled by wars, epidemics and general tribulations. The First World War, the Spanish flue epidemic which killed millions fulfilled these conditions. And among many Christian denominations it was believed that the late 19th or early 20th century was the period when Jesus would come again to the world.

These beliefs were based upon a variety of indications contained in prophecies mentioned in the sacred writings of Islam and Christianity. Muhammad, The Holy Prophet of Islam had also said very clearly how The Promised Messiah would be identified. This was contained in an oral tradition written down many years after his death.

Regarding the Mahdi, Muhammad is recorded as saying, "There are appointed two signs which have never been manifested for any other claimant since the creations of the heavens and the earth. They are that, at his advent, there shall occur an eclipse of the moon on the first of its appointed nights and an eclipse of the sun on the middle one of its appointed days and both will occur in the same month of Ramadhan."

Normally the eclipse of the moon occurs on the 13th, 14th or 15th of a lunar month, while the eclipse of the sun takes place on the 27th, 28th or 29th. The conditions mentioned by Muhammad therefore meant that the moon would be eclipsed on the 13th and the sun on the 28th of the same lunar month which would be Ramadhan.

The celestial signs were not to announce the physical birth of the Mahdi but his spiritual arrival. On the 13th of Ramadhan, 1311 Hegira (Thursday, March 21st, 1894) the moon was eclipsed and on the 28th of Ramadhan, thus the same lunar month, (6th April, 1894) the sun was eclipsed. The same phenomenon was repeated in the North American continent the following year.

Thus the criteria laid down by Muhammad were exactly fulfilled, being some five years after Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced that he was the Guided Teacher whose advent had been foretold. It was also revealed to him that he was The Promised Messiah whose advent had been foretold not only in Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but in all the principal religions of the world such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism.

A further revelation by God allowed him to announce that he was the "Champion of God in the mantles of all the Prophets". He added that he himself was nothing and claimed no merit. What Almighty God had bestowed on him in his Grace was in consequence of his utter devotion and

obedience to Muhammad. He was thus a perfect spiritual reflection of Muhammad.

He was also a prophet. But he was not a law-giving prophet, he emphasised. Muhammad had been the last law-giving prophet.

His own task, said Ahmad, was to revive Islam and then unite all religions under Islam. This definition of the role that he said God had called upon him to play in the salvation of mankind produced a crescendo of denunciation from other Muslims, Christians and Hindus.

The priests and missionaries of Christianity, the muftis and other religious leaders of Islam were unanimous in their verdict: Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was not just mistaken in his views, he was Satan himself.

Every Muslim agreed that The Promised Messiah was expected. And it was generally agreed that when he did arrive he would arrive in the faith of Islam. Other faiths hold that the door to God's thoughts, and thus divine revelation, is now firmly closed.

It is not so with Islam.

Thus the advent of a divinely inspired teacher is thought possible only in Islam. Islam is the only faith that requires belief in all the Prophets, wherever and whenever they might have appeared.

In the Quran Muslims are commanded to affirm: "We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and in that which was sent down to Abraham and Jacob and his children and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to all Prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between any of them and to Him do we wholly submit ourselves."

Jesus had made it clear that a "second coming" meant the coming of another prophet who was clothed in the first

prophet's power and spirit. John The Baptist had been the second coming of Elijah, said Jesus.

The expectation of the second advent of a great teacher and religious guide prompts the question: What would be his message and function?

As his advent had been prophesied in the principal faiths of the world, would there be a guided teacher for each faith and would their messages and functions be identical?

If the messages were identical then only one teacher would be needed. If the messages were different, then the arrival of so many religous teachers would not promote unity, peace, accord and spiritual fulfilment, but instead would foster hostility, discord, enmity and chaos.

Yet another question would be:

If each of these teachers arrived within the dispensation of their own faiths, would they uphold the values of that faith as originally defined? If they departed from them what would be the scope of their doctrines and teachings?

Either contingency would raise problems that would be difficult to resolve.

Mankind has been constantly pressing forward to a unity of aim and purpose. All the developments that have taken place, say religious leaders, indicate that God's hand would therefore fall on one single human being and The Promised Messiah would be a single person, not a number of people in different faiths.

Muslims are in no doubt about the functions and duties of the Mahdi and The Promised Messiah. He would make Islam prevail over all other religions, even those that Muslims associated with the worship of several gods or multiple gods in one godhead such as the Hindu and Christian faiths.

A number of factors, it is argued, would appear to indicate that The Promised Messiah would emerge from Islam. There was, for instance, the universality of the mission of

Muhammad. Consider, for instance, these statements from the Quran:

"Proclaim, O Prophet: O Mankind verily I am God's Messenger to you all."

"We have sent thee as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner for the whole of mankind, but most people know not."

"We have sent thee as a mercy for the Universe."

The Quran, it is argued, also contains comprehensive guidance for the whole of mankind for the whole of time as is indicated by the following verses:

"A Messenger from God reciting pure scriptures wherein are lasting commandments."

"The Quran is a Reminder for all peoples."

"The Quran is a source of honour for the whole of mankind."

"Blessed is He Who has sent down the Discriminating Book to his servant that he may be a Warner to all the peoples."

The Quran has the unique distinction of all the scriptures, say Muslims, in that it alone, from beginning to end, is an exact and accurate version of the verbal revelations that Muhammad claimed God had given to him.

The words of God are safeguarded against perversion, says the Quran, under Divine Decree. "Surely, We ourself have sent down this exhortation, and We will, most surely, safeguard it."

The divine guarantee of safeguarding the Quran is not confined to the integrity of the text. One Muslim scholar has written: "It extends to all the factors that bear upon the preservation of the Quran as the perfect source of divine guidance for the whole of mankind for all time. For instance, it is a guarantee that the language in which the Quran was revealed, namely classical Arabic, would always continue

a living language in current use so that no difficulty might be encountered in determining and comprehending the meaning of the Quran.

"Classical Arabic is today spoken and written over a much vaster area of the earth and by many hundred times the number of people than was the case when the Quran was revealed.

"Besides, the Holy Prophet predicted that at the beginning of every century God would raise someone from among his followers who would set forth from the Quran the guidance that might be needed by mankind from time to time. In the case of no other scripture has the integrity of its text, its language and its guidance been maintained."

Muhammad revealed that a prophet would be raised in Islam who would not only defend Islam against the concerted attacks of the followers and exponents of other faiths, but would establish the superiority of Islam in every respect over all other religions. It was therefore totally within the teachings and beliefs of Islam when Mirza Ghulam Ahmad began to receive revelations which, he claimed, were from God. These started in 1876. As time passed the revelations multiplied and became more exact.

Every one of his revelations, says a Muslim scholar, "was clearly fulfilled according to its tenor at its due time. Some of them that related to future events have been fulfilled from time to time since his death. Some await fulfilment."

CHAPTER THREE

Chieftains of Qadian

Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, the father of Ahmad, was a chieftain of the Punjab and principal landowner of the village of Qadian. His father had been entitled to a seat at the durbars of the Mogul emperor and this was continued for him under the Sikh and British governments. He also owned houses in other towns. This did not imply riches, but it did mean servants and a recognised position of authority. It also meant that Ahmad was taught at home by various tutors.

The family was of noble descent, as it is normally meant, in that it was descended from a successful warrior. Around the year 1530 Mirza Hadi Beg, a central Asian chieftain of Persian descent, moved out of Samarkand and, accompanied by his family and about 200 retainers, entered the Punjab and settled down in an open area in the district of Gurdaspur, about 70 miles due East of Lahore. There he founded a walled and fortified village which he named Islampur.

Mirza Hadi Beg was a descendant of the uncle of the famous Amir Taimur and, as a scion of the royal family which had founded the Mogul empire, he was granted an estate of several hundred villages and appointed judge or Qadhi of the surrounding district. Islampur, the village he had founded, came to be known as Islampur Qadhi. In the course of time the word "Islampur" was dropped and the village was called Qadhian. This later became Qadian.

The family had its successes and failures over the next two hundred years, at one time commanding a force of 7,000 men

under the Mogul emperor. Finally they consolidated their ownership of some 85 villages and became, in effect, the quasi-rulers of some sixty square miles. But the Mogul empire was under threat, especially in the Punjab, from the expansion of the Sikhs. At the beginning of the 19th century the Mirza estate had shrunk to the village of Qadian itself, which had become a besieged fortress. It was now surrounded by a wall 22 feet high and 18 feet wide. There were four towers in which was lodged the town guard. They had a few guns.

In 1802, some say by treachery of an inhabitant, the Sikhs stormed into Qadian. Mosques and homes were looted. The library and all the papers of the Mirza family were burnt. A number of people were killed. The Mirza family itself was made prisoner. Not long afterwards they were expelled from the village and, as refugees, struggled across the nearby river Beas to Begowal. The ruler of that territory made them a small allowance and there they stayed in genteel poverty for the next 15 years.

By about 1818 the Sikh ruler, Maharajah Ranjit Singh, had consolidated his authority and so permitted the Mirza family to return to Qadian. Mirza Ghulam Murtaza joined the army of the Maharajah, fought in many campaigns and, in 1834, as a reward for his services, the Maharajah returned to him five villages from the ancestral estate of 85.

In 1839 Maharajah Ranjit Singh died, the Sikh empire started to break up and shortly afterwards the British expanded into the Punjab. The British confirmed Mirza Ghulam Murtaza's possession of Qadian and some hamlets near by, but refused to recognise his ownership of the five villages returned to him by Ranjit Singh. They granted him instead a life rent of 700 rupees a year. They did nothing at all about the other 80 villages. The disputes about all the missing villages were to grumble on for the next 50 years and to condition the thoughts of Ahmad about the value of property in this world.

The Mirza family had remained loyal to the Sikh maharajah when the British were subverting his power by promising bribes of land and money to both Sikh and Muslim chieftains when they took over. It was alleged, perhaps with good cause, that this loyalty to the previous ruler was remembered by the British when it came to the question of returning the Mirza estates.

Certainly some Muslim and Sikh chieftains, who had given help to the British before the end of the Sikh rule, were successful in regaining control of, or enlarging, their family estates. Or perhaps, looking at its pragmatically from the viewpoint of time, the British decided that to redistribute the land as it was when the Sikhs came to power would cause more grievances than it would assuage.

Mirza Ghulam Murtaza served the British government as faithfully as he had served the previous Sikh government. He and his brother received written commendations from various British generals for the part they played in putting down the rebellion of 1857. At their own expense they raised 50 mounted troopers. General Nicholson, wrote in August, 1857, ''After the suppression of the insurgents I will look to the welfare of your family''.

But a month later General Nicholson was dead. And from then no British official had any personal interest in rewarding the services of the Mirza family by restoring their ancestral estate. All that Mirza Ghulam Murtaza received was a pension of 200 rupees a year for his services during the rebellion. On the death of Ahmad's father many years later, Sir Robert Egerton, a financial commissioner of the Punjab, wrote to Ahmad's brother, now the head of the family, ''I will keep in mind the restoration and welfare of your family when a favourable opportunity occurs''.

But that favourable opportunity never arose. It was to be alleged from then on, however, that the Mirza family –

and Ahmad himself – had always been given preferential treatment by the British government.

The wearisome and apparently never-ending legal battles to recover the lost family estates were to occupy the time and the thoughts of Ahmad's father almost to the end of his life. And it was Ahmad he asked to conduct the cases for him.

CHAPTER FOUR

Legal Battles

There were no schools or colleges in most of India when Ahmad was born. Education in Muslim households consisted of learning the Holy Quran and, at the best, learning to read Urdu and Persian. Ahmad's first tutor was engaged when he was about six or seven, so around 1841. He taught Ahmad verses of the Quran and started on a few elementary Persian books. When he was about 10 another tutor was engaged. He worked hard with Ahmad and taught him the elements of Arabic.

A few other boys came to his house to share the services of the tutors. One tutor was often teased though Ahmad did not join in. He was a serious, studious boy and when the day's lessons were done – they were held in what was a living room – he normally climbed the stairs to his room, which was immediately above, and continued reading. When he was about 17 another tutor was engaged who taught him more Arabic and something of logic.

Ahmad thus led a somewhat privileged, comfortable life. Most village boys were herding goats from the time they were six or seven and their parents had no conception of education and no means to carry it out if they had. Ahmad's father, as well as being the hereditary chieftain of Qadian, was a trained soldier and used to commanding men and having his orders obeyed.

People were scared of him. He was equally choleric to people of his own rank and to British government officials.

At a meeting with one British official the Briton asked him how far away was Qadian. It produced an immediate misunderstanding. For the British official it was a polite, innocuous generality, a way of starting off the conversation. That was not how Mirza Ghulam Murtaza took it.

He flared up. If you want to know how far places are apart then ask your servant he told the official. "I am not your servant," he added, ramming the point home.

The British official was nonplussed, then he apologised and the conversation started again.

If it had a sense of his own dignity it might also be thought that beneath his gruff exterior was a kind heart. He had studied medicine and as there were no doctors in the area he looked after all the people in the surrounding district. He never charged for his services.

He must also be considered a good doctor for a chief of *Batala* called him in when he was ill. When he recovered he offered Mirza Ghulam Murtaza the rents of two villages as a reward for his services. Mirza Ghulam Murtaza refused. He never took any payment for his medical treatments and he certainly could not accept the rents of the two villages. They were two of the villages in his ancestral estate and to accept them in this way, when he believed they were rightfully his, would compromise not only his honour but also that of his descendants.

As with other privileged children Ahmad's playmates asked him to get them things from his house which they did not have. Once it was sugar. Ahmad filled his pockets with some white crystals. It turned out to be salt!

Ahmad could ride and swim – he was once saved from drowning by an old man who happened to be near – and he could run fast, but he never cared for games or sports and seldom took an active part in them. Usually his playmates asked him to be umpire. Most young men learned martial

arts in those days – fencing was a popular pastime – and for a member of the Mirza family it was considered almost essential to be skilled in the use of the sword, the bow and the gun.

But Ahmad never became involved in any of these martial sports. Already his future life was starting to take shape. In that worldly household, where 'getting on' and recovering the family estates were the two main subjects of conversation, Ahmad was interested in a different life. When he was a mere child he was with a cousin called Hurmat Bibi, the daughter of his maternal uncle, when the subject of prayer arose, as it does even with small children. Ahmad asked her, ''Pray that I might be granted the grace of prayer''.

When he was 17 he and Hurmat Bibi were married. It was an arranged marriage not a love match and it faltered from the start. There were two sons, Sultan Ahmad and Fazal Ahmad, born in the first four years, but after that the light of their marriage grew dim and finally went out. Hurmat Bibi and her two sons moved into the household of Ahmad's brother – he and his wife had no children – and Ahmad moved back into his single bachelor room.

When he was not in his room reading the Quran the family always knew where to look for him – he was in the mosque. Indeed, one of his father's friends visiting them one day, said, ''I know you say that you have two sons, but I have only ever seen one. Where is your other son?''

Ahmad was sent for, a shy, diffident boy, it is recalled, who stared at the ground and answered monosyllabically when he was spoken to.

On another occasion a friend arrived and found Mirza Ghulam Murtaza sweating profusely. A government official was arriving shortly and he had to arrange his accommodation, he said. The friend asked why he had not asked one of his sons to arrange this matter. Mirza Ghulam

Murtaza explained that his elder son worked in Gurdaspur and only came home every seven or 10 days.

"Come and look at the other one," he said. He led him to a room where Ahmad was lying reading a book about the traditions of Muhammad. Though they stood there some time Ahmad never realised they were there. When they got downstairs Mirza Ghulam Murtaza asked his friend, "Tell me, do you think he is in the land of the living?"

When Ahmad was reading the Quran he used to walk from one side of the room to the other and the rest of the household, hearing his footsteps, used to joke about the long walks he took in a small room. Most often he was barefoot in his room. This habit of walking from side to side when he was reading, annotating or writing continued all his life.

The principal books he studied at this period of his life – from 13 to 20 – were the Quran, then the Bukhari which he read constantly. Other books he read were Dala-i-lulkhairat and Masnawi Maulana Rum, both of which he liked very much. He also used to read Tazkikeratul Aulia, Futhoohul Ghaib and Safarus-sa-aadat.

By the time he was 16 he had also already studied intently both the Bible and the Vedas of the Hindus and the commentaries of Christian writers. He annotated them as carefully as he did the Quran. "I have given serious thought to the objections they raise against Islam," he told a friend. "In my room I have collected the objections raised against Muhammad. They number nearly 3,000."

The defender of Islam was already at work.

But by the time he was in his 20s Ahmad's father was convinced that his son was spending too much time reading and praying and too little time learning how to make a living. He was worried how Ahmad would survive after his death. There were constant bitter denunciations of his way of life.

Ahmad seemed not to understand what all the fuss was about. When he heard a family friend complain about a lost business opportunity he remarked that he did not under-

stand why people worried so much about money and success.

"Wait until you have a family of your own and then you will think differently," said the man.

His father finally decided that Ahmad should help manage the family estate. He would also help him in his legal battles to recover the lost family fortune.

In one of his 85 books Ahmad has recounted his father's feelings for him. He wanted him to be occupied with worldly affairs though this was not to his liking. "Nevertheless, out of goodwill and in order to gain spiritual merit, but not for the sake of any wordly gain, I devoted myself to serving my father and for his sake I occupied myself with worldly affairs...

"He often said that he desired me to participate in worldly affairs out of a feeling of sympathy for me, though he realised that religion was alone worth pursuing and that he himself was only wasting his time."

Courts in India at that time operated without much regard for time. A day was given for proceedings to begin and all those involved in the cases to be heard turned up at the same time. When the judge was ready to hear a particular case a crier would go outside and shout out the names of the plaintiff and defendant. If, after several days of waiting, you did not happen to be there, then you were unlucky – the case went ahead without you.

Ahmad used the time of waiting to study the Quran and, of course, to say the obligatory prayers. His study of the Quran was so intense that the driver of a bullock cart recounted that once he took Ahmad from Qadian to Batala, some 11 miles away. The journey took two hours and throughout that time Ahmad read and reread only one page, that of the Sura Fatiha, the opening Chapter of the Holy Quran.

Many of his father's legal cases were heard in Dalhousie, a hill station some 100 miles from Qadian and 8,000 feet

above sea level, or in Lahore, which is about 70 miles from Qadian. The roads were little better than tracks and there was no public transport which meant that Ahmad went on foot, taking several days on the journey.

Though he disliked the purpose of his journey Ahmad said later that he enjoyed the grandeur of the scenery, the majestic mountains, the lush greenery of the vegetation and the sparkling, gushing mountain streams. It was totally different from the heat and dust of Qadian in the summer and the mud and damp during the rainy season when Qadian was sometimes totally surrounded by water and you could paddle round the town in a canoe.

"I felt the infinite beauty and glory of God in these surroundings," he said later. "I felt closer to God."

As well as the legal actions to recover the lost family estates Ahmad's father occasionally got involved in law suits with his tenants. Once his father sued some tenants for cutting down trees in the fields that he rented to them. Ahmad felt that his father was wrong in his attitude. The trees were a product of the fields, just as the crops were, so surely some portion of the value of the trees belonged to the tenants?

The day before he left for these legal cases, after the Isha prayer he would tell the people in the mosque that he was going to court on his father's instructions. "Please pray to God that the truth may win. I do not ask that the judgement be given in my favour. God knows where the truth lies. Whosoever is in the right, in the sight of God, may he win and become victorious."

His opponents never doubted that Ahmad would tell the truth plainly and would not seek to slant it or embroider it to his own benefit. Once, in a much later case, when his family lawyer asked Ahmad what he was going to say, Ahmad said he could only tell the truth. After he had listened to Ahmad the lawyer shrugged his shoulders and said there was

no point in going into court. When the case was called he went before the judge and withdrew the case

In another later case the defendant called Ahmad as a witness for the defence. Ahmad's evidence was crucial and the case was decided in the defendant's favour. It caused a major family row.

"I cannot be expected to deny the truth" was Ahmad's only comment.

Indeed his reputation for telling the truth no matter the consequences was so strong that often the defendants would tell the judge that they were happy to abide by Ahmad's statement regarding the facts in dispute. Ahmad would then set out the facts as he knew them and sometimes this resulted in the case being decided against his father. In the case of the trees the villagers told the judge, "Ask Mirza Ghulam Ahmad what is the truth."

Ahmad gave his opinion, which was in favour of the villagers, and the judge decided against Ahmad's father.

The servants who had gone with Ahmad returned home slightly earlier than him and when his father asked them how the case had gone they were afraid to answer. They said they did not know. When Ahmad appeared and was questioned he did not attempt to conceal that it was his evidence that had lost his father the case.

His father exploded in anger. "Get out of my sight. Get out of the house," he shouted at him. He would have no more meals here he said.

His mother, however, served him with meals for a few days while his father raged. Then Ahmad left for Batala where the family had a house. He lived there for two months until his father's temper cooled and he was told he could come home.

On one occasion Ahmad was at the noon prayer when his case was called. The defendant urged that the case be

decided in his favour because no one was in court to represent the plaintiffs. But the judge rejected the plea, studied the papers previously submitted by Ahmad and questioned the defendant and then gave his judgement. Ahmad, his prayers finished, returned to court where he was told the case had already been decided.

Ahmad entered the courtroom and, believing the case must have been decided against him, told the judge that he had been at the noon prayer when the case was called and so could not attend. He asked that the case be heard again. The judge shook his head and smiled. He had given his decision and was not going to rescind it – it was in favour of Ahmad's father.

His father's fight to recover the villages continued and as they rose to higher and higher courts the costs mounted. He was now pouring in vast sums of money. At the final count it was estimated that he had spent 70,000 rupees, a staggering sum when it is considered that his pension for military services was only 200 rupees a year and the life rent of the five villages was only 700 rupees a year.

The legal battle finally went to the court in Lahore. The case occupied several days and each day a servant of the family friends with whom Ahmad was staying brought his lunch to court. One day Ahmad told the servant to take it back to the house because he would return to the house and eat it there. He did not need to remain in court any longer, he said. Shortly afterwards Ahmad arrived with a cheerful smile on his face.

Had he won? he was asked.

No, lost, replied Ahmad.

Why then was he so happy?

It meant that was the end of the litigation for ever, said Ahmad. The case could be taken no further. As a result he would no longer be occupied with this forlorn quest. He

could forget legal technicalities and devote more time to prayer and the study of the Quran.

For his father, however, it was the end of a dream and he became bitter and disillusioned, comparing what the family now had with what they had possessed when he was a boy.

His father's concern that Ahmad would be nearly penniless after his death grew stronger. His army pension would cease as would the rent from the five villages. This was what they lived on for the rents they received from their Qadian property were quite small. And on his death they would be divided between Ahmad and his elder brother.

It was not until 1864, when Ahmad was 29, that his father finally had his way. He secured for him a job as a court clerk in the civil administration of the district of Sialkot, some miles away from Qadian. It changed the location, but not the tenor of his life. He rented a simple room and returned there almost immediately after his work was done. There he locked the door and it was only opened to his landlord who took up his evening meal. He also had the use of a small courtyard where he could pray without being disturbed.

Naturally there was curiosity about how Ahmad spent his time and some neighbours managed to look in when the door was opened. They discovered that Ahmad was praying or reading the Quran. Sometimes he had thrown himself into the *Sijda,* a position of extreme supplication, where he stayed for long periods. Once they heard him pray, "Oh God, My Lord. This is Thy Holy Word. It is not possible for me to grasp its meaning unless Thou helps me in the task Thyself."

Some of the peasants who became involved in law suits followed Ahmad to his home with the intention of securing his personal intervention with the help of a modest bribe. Ahmad refused absolutely to see them and had his landlord explain that he would deal with the cases, in so much as he was able, when the offices were open during the day.

Though he would not help people dishonestly he did help them in other ways. His simple room and meagre diet

consumed only a small proportion of his salary. He used the rest to help neighbours whose needs were very obvious. And as his father had trained him in medicine he also bought medicaments and treated them.

Nor would he impose on people he had to meet officially. He was occasionally sent to outlying villages to record details of evidence in disputes that were to come to court. On these expeditions most officials expected to be provided with food and accommodation for themselves, the servant who went with them and their horse, even though they were given money for these expenses.

Ahmad did not. He took not only his own food but fodder for his horse. And it was the servant who rode most of the way. Ahmad said he preferred to walk.

Though he was little given to chit-chat about the affairs of the office he would pass the time of day with colleagues as they walked to their respective homes after work. A discussion arose as to who was the fastest runner. They decided to have a race and Ahmad, though he had not been involved in the discussion, took part. They raced in their bare feet.

Much to the surprise of his colleagues it was Ahmad who arrived first at the bridge, the agreed finishing post. His victory is not truly surprising because he walked several miles every day to the end of his life and his diet, though sparse, kept him lean and fit.

At Sialkot, though his life was quiet, studious and lonely, Ahmad found himself in demand for private discussions with Hindus and Christians as well as Muslims. Among his friends there were a Hindu lawyer, the courthouse caretaker, the headmaster of a Christian school and a physician and chemist. One place where they often met was the shop of the physician and chemist, which was not far from where Ahmad now lived. With this physician and chemist Ahmad studied medicine.

But mostly they discussed religion. Mere observance of prayer was not enough said Ahmad during a discussion about

prayer, it is recalled. Nor was it sufficient to attach yourself to a spiritual leader. Each man must strive for himself. And he quoted the verse from the Quran, "And indeed those who strive in Our ways verily We shall guide them to the paths which bring them to Us."

Ahmad also met many Christian missionaries who, at that time often preached in the bazaars and usually were vehement in their denunciations of Islam. Ahmad did not get involved in acrimonious public debate, but in earnest private discussion with a few missionaries. One of them, the Rev. Butler of the Church Missionary Society, became a firm friend.

When Mr. Butler was due to return to Britain he came to the offices in Sialkot to say goodbye to Ahmad. Europeans, in those days, had a very strong belief that they were the governing class and nothing should be done which would lessen the people's respect for them. Mr. Butler happened to meet the commissioner on his visit to the office and he presumed that Mr. Butler had come to see him.

Well, no, confessed Mr. Butler. He had come to say goodbye to Ahmad.

Lowly government clerks in those days did not have desks and Ahmad was sitting on a mat on the floor along with other clerks. Mr. Butler sat down and chatted to Ahmad while he made his farewells, much to the astonishment of both the British officials and the Indian clerical staff.

Ahmad was a great religious thinker, Mr. Butler explained later, and he was proud to have known him. They had clashed many times on religious points. Once Mr. Butler said that the reason why Jesus was born from a virgin was so that he should remain free of the taint of sin transmitted by Adam to all his progeny.

Ahmad asked how that could be since Mary herself was descended from Adam. And was it not Eve who had tempted Adam to take the fruit of the forbidden tree so turning him into a sinner?

Mr. Butler, whose missionary training had apparently not included much theological argument, was unable to answer.

What was Ahmad like as a defender of Islam?

One description was, "There was a special kind of shine and quality in his eyes. His nature is humble but commanding. His temperament is cool but heart-warming. His ability to withstand harshness has brought balance to his humility. He talks so softly that he appears to be smiling."

This aspect of his character, his ready smile, was mentioned again and again throughout his life by both friends and opponents. One friend described him as having "a halo of spiritual radiance and serenity and a glow of supernatural glory". There was "a loving tenderness" that emanated from him which was "a natural manifestation of his self and soul". It was combined with "a beaming smile and everlasting calmness".

Other mellifluous descriptions talked of his "spiritual glow and serenity", of his "sparkling glow of spiritual light" and "his serene and peaceful brilliance".

More direct was a description of him physically. He had a very fair complexion – "almost like wheat," said his brother-in-law. But his skin had a faint red hue which is common in Northern India. He never turned pale, it is said, even in moments of extreme anguish.

In moments of great personal tragedy did he cry in the privacy of his home? No one is alive who can say whether he did or did not. No one has left a written record. But a few people have recorded that they eavesdropped by accident when Ahmad was praying privately and sometimes Ahmad wept copiously in anguish during prayer. One description says "the ground was wet in front of his eyes" but that perhaps can be considered a poetic exaggeration.

A more direct description of his appearance at this time says that his hair was black, his beard thick, his eyes dark

brown, his eyelashes "long and shadowy" and his forehead "fairly broad, straight and upright".

In the Quran men are counselled against the "Unnecessary stare" – the "Ghaz-e-basar" – and should therefore, whenever possible, keep their eyes half closed. It was an injunction Ahmad obeyed all his life.

In Sialkot, despite his discussions with missionaries and friends, Ahmad, in general, found that life there was a great penance. He lived there "alone in company and single in a crowd" he said later.

His immediate office superior, a Hindu, disliked Islam and never neglected an opportunity to pass a disparaging remark. Because he was Ahmad's superior he also thought that he should come off best in any religious discussion. That was difficult with Ahmad.

Once a friend advised Ahmad to let his superior win these arguments. It will be easier for you, he advised. But Ahmad refused absolutely. I cannot let Islam go undefended, he said. So he suffered the consequences in the pinpricks of punctiliousness that a mean-minded superior can inflict on someone under his authority.

Sialkot is like a jail to me, he told a neighbour from Qadian – he had brought him some clothes from his mother – when he was asked how he liked his new job. Later he said how much he disliked the fact that his job forced him to meet with all kinds of people. "I was surprised at their manner of life. I found that most of them were eager to collect money lawfully or unlawfully and all their effects in this brief life were directed towards the world. I found few who cultivated the higher moral values like meekness, nobility, chastity, lowliness, sympathy and purity.

"I found most of them afflicted with arrogance, misconduct, neglect of religious values and all types of evil morals ... all that time I passed in great constraint and unease."

In 1868, some four years after his arrival in Sialkot, Ahmad received a message from his father asking him to resign his position and return home immediately. His mother was dangerously ill. Ahmad did so. At Batala railway station his father had sent out a yakka, a horse-drawn cart, to meet him. The driver told Ahmad that his mother was much worse. Ahmad's concern for his mother grew deeper. This was a stratagem, he feared, to break the news gently that his mother was already dead. And so it was.

His mother, whose name was Chiragh Bibi, was a gentle woman, kind and generous to those in bereavement or in poverty. Ahmad missed her greatly and prayed often for her soul.

CHAPTER FIVE

Islam in Decline

Ahmad now devoted the major portion of his day to the study of the Quran and the sayings and traditions of Muhammad. He also had gathered together a wide range of commentaries on the Quran and the sayings written over the centuries, sometimes in several editions. He also had the Bible in various editions supplied by British and American protestant missionary groups, by the Roman Catholic church and the Torah of the Jews. He also studied works and commentaries on Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.

His study was also his bedroom, the same small bare room on the first floor in the outer male section of the house that he had occupied as a boy. So that he would not be disturbed by having to come down to meals, or be interrupted by a servant bringing up his meal, Ahmad arranged that his food be placed in a basket which he could then draw up to his room when he was ready. He could thus continue studying while he ate.

Ahmad and many other Muslims considered at this time that Islam was not only under attack but also in decline. The conquest of India by the British had opened the sub-continent to the proselytising of missionaries, mostly from Britain but also from the United States, Germany and other European countries, and many of them considered this as a truly God-given opportunity to convert the East to Christianity.

The British military and civil government did not, in the main, regard the establishment of Christianity as one of the

reasons for its presence in India. Despite pressure from missionary societies they allowed all religions to compete without interference. This Pax Britannicus won the wholehearted approbation of Ahmad.

Christianity certainly did obtain a modicum of preferential treatment, but equally important was the fact that Christianity was the religion of the governing class. If you wanted to improve your station in life then becoming a Christian could help, some people believed. It was not necessarily true. The British seldom tried to impose their culture, unlike some other colonial powers.

Christianity was a new religion for most of India and its presence was visible. While the missionaries won converts, it seemed to many Muslims that Islam was rent by futile arguments over trifles. There were many mosques, but few worshippers.

Muhammad had prophesied that a time would come when Muslims would be more interested in the outward signs of their faith than what it meant. They would beautify their mosques and produce gloriously decorated and worked silk covers for the Quran. But they would be absent from the mosque and neglect the guidance contained inside the Quran. As to the five obligatory daily prayers many would neglect them completely while for others their prayers would be empty of spirit, reduced only the formal postures of the Salat – Prayer.

Muhammad summarised the arrival of this period in a well-known passage:

"A time would arrive when the Muslims will praise a person for his courage, his agreeableness, his grand manners and his wisdom, while there would not be a particle of faith in his heart."

How was it that Islam was so divided while other religions were intensifying their missionary efforts Ahmad asked. He

described his feelings in a poem he wrote in Persian: "Before your very eyes Islam has fallen into the dust. What excuse will you offer to God, O Muslims, who pass your lives in luxury?"

There were Christian missionaries in India and in all the European colonies throughout the world, but there were no missionaries of Islam in Europe or in the United States. Islam was standing still where it was not actually decaying.

Muslims were neglecting the great moral values of Islam, said Ahmad. They should have confidence and pride in the eternal verities and guidance contained in the Quran. These moral values should regulate all aspects of their conduct during their daily lives.

Christians were certain of the truth of the Bible, no matter their differences about other minor matters, Ahmad believed. But he declared that Muslims were divided into two camps regarding the very fundamentals of Islam.

There were those who gave pre-eminence to the Quran, but practically rejected the reported sayings of Muhammad as unreliable. The other side attached so much importance to the sayings of Muhammad that they subordinated the Quran to them.

Ahmad declared that the Quran was fundamental and supreme, but that the sayings of Muhammad were a source of guidance for the understanding of the Quran. Unless a reported saying was irreconcilable with the Quran then it should be accepted as authentic.

But he pointed out that the practices, or Sunnah, of Muhammad, had been filtered down through the centuries directly from the Companions of Muhammad and so were a much surer source of guidance than the sayings, which had not been gathered together until some two hundred years after Muhammad's death. He formulated a policy which allowed all the sayings to be judged by the same criteria and so

preserved for Islam the great treasury of understanding and insight contained in them.

Of the total authenticity and validity of the Quran as the revealed word of God, Ahmad admitted no argument. According to some Muslim divines many verses of the Quran, perhaps as many as six hundred, had been abrogated by subsequently revealed verses. Ahmad rejected totally the idea of any abrogation of a verse, a phrase or a word of the Quran. The words that God had dictated to Muhammad could not be altered or deleted by any man in any way, he said.

In Batala he had come in contact with a youth of his own age called Muhammad Hussain. He shared the same interests of Ahmad and as a result they had many discussions. Of that period Muhammad Hussain was to write, "From his very childhood he is known to have been very fond of *Durood and Wazaaif.* When a boy at his lessons he used to keep such books as Tohfa-i-Hind, Tohfa-tul Honood, Khal'atul Honood as well as Shia, Suni and Christian literature as well as books on *Monazirah,* he was always dominated by a desire to produce literature in support of Islam which should make this religion prevail over all others."

Of his character he was to say that he was "reliable, trustworthy and dignified in appearance, a man of high resolve and sublime thoughts. He did not think anything was of importance if it was in opposition to his great resolve."

Muhammad Hussain was not always to maintain that high regard for Ahmad.

CHAPTER SIX

Defender of the Faith

Mirza Ghulam Murtaza continued to press his son at intervals to take up some secure job which would provide him with a livelihood for the rest of his life. He was offered a post in the education service of the nearby state of Kapurthala, but turned it down. Explaining his reasons to his father, Ahmad wrote, "I have no desire to take up any kind of service. All I ask for is two suits of coarse homespun cloth and a little bread of whatever kind and quality might be available. That is all."

And in another letter he wrote, "I therefore wish I could spend the rest of my days in some solitary corner, drawing myself away from the company of men and busying myself with the remembrance of God ... There is no stability in this world. All life is transient."

Ahmad's father remarked to a friend "It is his attitude alone with which I am pleased. I know it is the right path that he is pursuing."

But every so often his anxiety would resurface. "he does not know when the sun gets up or goes in", he told a friend. He sits all day surrounded by books except when he goes to the mosque.

Though he came from such a well-known family Ahmad, because of his seclusion, was virtually unknown except to people interested in religion. They recognised him as an authority on the Quran and it was in that capacity he was asked to confront his old companion Muhammad Hussain.

Muhammad Hussain had gone to study in Delhi and when he returned he was a convinced member of the Wahabi sect. This aroused considerable antagonism among his neighbours. When Ahmad visited Batala a man who knew him seized upon his visit as an opportunity to discomfit Muhammad Hussain. Ahmad would be their champion and show Muhammad Hussain how wrong his new beliefs were.

With the reluctant Ahmad in their midst, they set out to find Muhammad Hussain. As with all crowds more and more joined as they walked, all eager for the forthcoming intellectual battle but perhaps even more eager for the discomfiture of a neighbour. They found Muhammad Hussain in the mosque. Ahmad seated himself opposite him and when the hubbub died down the first question he put was to establish the basis on which they were to argue.

What was the position he took? What was his claim? asked Ahmad.

Muhammad Hussain replied, "My position is that the Quran has the first place – as the basis for all our views. The words of Muhammad as reported in the sayings come after the Quran. When anything is opposed or in conflict in any way with these two sources then they deserve no consideration at all, no matter who said them."

As soon as Ahmad heard this he exclaimed, "If that is your view it is most reasonable. There is nothing to be said against it."

He got to his feet in order to return to Qadian. As far as he was concerned the discussion was over.

Immediately there was a great shout from all the spectators. Voices were raised in anger. The man who had been instrumental into bringing Ahmad into the confrontation was furious. "Disgraceful. Disgraceful," he cried. "You have let us be humiliated. Can't you think of anything to say to him at all?"

Ahmad remained unmoved. How could he dare to say that certain decisions of God, revealed to Muhammad and recorded in the Quran, should be put aside? he asked. How could he dare suggest that precedence should be given instead to words that Muhammad was only reported to have said? There was no comparison between the two, he said.

Ahmad was derided for having – in many people's opinion – surrendered too easily. But he was not ashamed. He had only said what was correct. Nothing can be held superior to the revealed word of God, he repeated.

He revealed later that he had had a revelation from God about his conduct. "Thy God is well pleased with thee for this act and would bless thee."

A Christian mission had opened in Batala but, unlike Sialkot, Ahmad never made contact with it. As he did not live in Batala he thought it better that the defence of Islam be left in the hands of Muslims who were immediately available.

One Muslim from Batala came to Ahmad for help in this battle to repulse the Christian missionaries. He was a revenue official called Nabi Bakhsh. Ahmad dictated notes to him about the subjects likely to be raised by missionaries. He asked Nabi Bakhsh to attack Islam as ruthlessly as he could so that he could demonstrate that Islam could be defended no matter from where the attack came.

Ahmad at this time was using a Bible published in Mirzapore. He made many notes in the margin and would prepare extracts of passages for Nabi Bakhsh to learn by heart.

Ahmad used to instruct him in both *Ilzami* and *Tahqiqi* methods of debate. For a public meeting with a Christian missionary he advised the Ilzami method for this, he said, effectively silenced them, giving less well educated people the impression that the speaker for Islam had scored a point.

In a private discussion with a seeker after truth, however,

Ahmad suggested the Tahqiqi method which involved a profound comparison between Islamic teachings and the views held by other religions. If the Ilzami answer was first given to serious enquirers there was a real danger that the impression might be given that there was no real answer to the criticism contained in the question.

When major attacks were made on Islam, Ahmad reluctantly decided to enter the fray. The three main religions of the Indian sub-continent, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, had, to a very great extent, tolerated each other. They did not attack each other. That situation changed abruptly with the rise of the Arya Samaj Hindu sect which had grown up around the person and teachings of Swami Dayanand. He was virulently anti-Muslim and preached against Muhammad and the Quran.

Ahmad decided that these attacks had to be answered. He did not wish to break his seclusion and therefore asked family friends if he could reply to these attacks under their names. They agreed. His first letters and articles were therefore published under various names. One of the older men whose name he wrote under was Sheikh Raheem Bakhsh, the father of Muhammad Hussain.

It was under his own name, however, that Ahmad issued a challenge. The foundation of all the virtues in human relationships was truthfulness, he said, and, to his mind, one could judge the worth of a religion by the measure of the emphasis which it laid on that quality. He had spent 20 years studying religion and he had come to the conclusion that no religion stressed the importance of truthfulness to the extent that Islam did.

Could any Christian, Hindu or Sikh produce more quotations from their scriptures about the value of truthfulness than he could produce from the Quran, he asked. Could they even produce half or even one-third of the

number that he could produce. He was willing to offer a prize of 500 rupees to anyone who could.

No one took up his challenge.

There was soon a practical demonstration that Ahmad lived his life by the tenets that he talked about. He had sent an article to a printer's with the package open at both ends. In this way it counted as printed paper and was carried at a much lower rate. In this packet he enclosed a letter of instructions to the printer. If this was considered to be a normal letter then it was against post office regulations. There were surprisingly harsh penalties for infringements – a fine of up to 500 rupees or even six months in jail!

The owner of the printing shop to where the article was sent was a Christian – and he must be considered as a fanatical Christian – for he immediately told the authorities about the letter of instructions. Ahmad was summoned to appear in court in Gurdaspur on a charge of defrauding the post office.

He consulted a lawyer and was told that the only way to escape conviction was to deny that he had put the letter in the packet. He could claim that a servant had unknowingly put the letter in the packet in order to save Ahmad's money.

Ahmad refused to be a party to this deception. His lawyer therefore refused to defend him and so Ahmad conducted his own defence. He admitted that he had put the letter in with the manuscript of the article. But it was not a private letter, it contained only instructions about how the article was to be printed. He therefore believed that he had done nothing wrong.

The British post office official was eloquent about this offence – perhaps more eloquent than would seem justified for what was a very minor offence. But after each submission the magistrate shook his head and said no. In his summing-up he said the charge should never have been brought.

It almost amounted to persecution. He was very impressed with Ahmad's forthright explanation. He dismissed the charge.

Ahmad had now decided that he should respond immediately to any attack on Islam. He also responded to any statement that he thought contrary to Islamic thought or even contrary to the mutual strands of all religions.

When Swami Dayanand, founder of the Arya Samaj Hindu sect, declared that the number of souls was infinite and not known even to God, Ahmad refuted this belief. The arguments he put forward were so conclusive and convincing that the secretary of the Central Samaj issued a statement saying that they were not blind followers of Swami Dayanand. They did not accept what the Swami said unless they found it reasonable.

Ahmad also decided that more was needed than just defence against attacks on Islam. Islam had to go on the offensive.

Says a Muslim scholar, "His study of the Holy Quran, his deep reflection over the eternal verities, his complete reliance on the grace and bounty of God and his experience of communion with Him had already equipped him with the qualities of an effective champion of Islam. Under a divinely inspired urge he was moved to embark on a project which would not only help to safeguard Islam against hostile attacks, but would clearly and demonstrably establish its superiority over all other faiths. He resolved to set forth the excellences of Islam in a monumental work which he designated Braheen Ahmadiyya."

The compilation and composition of this monumental work was a tremendous undertaking. Ahmad had access to the family library which, though it had been destroyed during the Sikh invasion, had now been restored to a respectable

size. He himself had his library, but that was all. Nor were there easy access to facilities outside Qadian.

It was now that the years of study, pondering the exact meaning of each verse came to fruition. His first-born son, Sultan Ahmad, speaking of these years, commented "I do believe absolutely that at that time he must have read the Quran 10,000 times."

So, when it came to seeking the exact verse of the Quran that he wished to use to support an argument, his mind could recall immediately where it was to be found. His mind could sift and co-relate verses and words quickly and comprehensively and with understanding.

His method of writing was interesting. He had two inkpots at different sides of the room. They were placed in saucers and made secure with a little rampart of mud around them so that they would not slip around. As he walked across the room he wrote on the paper he was carrying, recharged his pen from the inkpot on the side of the room he had reached, then walked back to the other side where he recharged his pen from the inkpot which he had placed there. In that way he never needed to cease writing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Columns of Spiritual Light

It is worth considering Ahmad's life-style at this period. There are a number of witnesses. First of all there was his cousin Mirza Din Muhammad who had not known originally that he existed. He was to write, "I was under the impression that Mirza Ghulam Murtaza had only one son for Ahmad lived in such seclusion in the house that I seldom saw him. In the mosque I often saw him and came to know, by and by, that he was the second son of Mirza Ghulam Murtaza."

He decided to meet him. "I was sitting in the mosque with his father when I saw Ahmad leaving. Hastily I got up and followered him. I caught up with him after he had entered his room and was bolting the door from the inside. He opened the door to me and asked if I had any business with him. I told him that I wished to meet him. He asked me to take a seat and enquired where I came from. ... Thus the two of us became acquainted."

After that, whenever Mirza Din Muhammad was in Qadian, he visited Ahmad and then studied under him. He also slept in his room when they had worked late into the night. It was small and the only furniture was a charpoy, a rough, wood-framed bed with interlacing strings – this formed a wide mesh on which a blanket or mattress was placed and a wooden *takhtposh* which is a covered bench.

Ahmad insisted that Mirza Din Muhammad sleep on the charpoy. At around 2 a.m. Ahmad would rise for the prayer of *Tahajjud.* He woke Mirza Din Muhammad gently with

a fine spray of water drops just as Muhammad had done with his followers in the Arabian desert more than 1300 years ago.

Once, when in later years a discussion arose about the difficulty of waking up at that time in the morning, Ahmad said, they should follow his example. "I tell myself, 'Ahmad, wake up for the prayer.' Then I just wake up."

Ahmad did not return to bed. He lit a small earthenware lamp began studying and praying until the call came for morning prayers, roughly an hour and a quarter before sunrise. He thus spent the greater part of each night in silent vigil and prayer.

He talked often of the value of prayer. Once when somebody said he prayed, but he did not think his prayers did much good and he had little interest in them, Ahmad said, "Whether you like it or not you should continue offering your prayers. A sick person does not want to take food, but those looking after him try to induce him to eat something. Sometimes they almost have to compel him. In the same way, whether you like praying or not, you should certainly continue offering your prayers."

He added, "Whenever I cannot understand something or am confronted with a difficulty, I forget about the difficulty and start praying to God – that solves the problem."

At another time he said that prayer was like digging a well. "Sometimes people lost heart and stop digging when, if they had dug just another few feet, they would reach water. So it is with prayer. You must keep on praying. It is no use to pray intensively for a few days and then give up."

Even when he was in bed Ahmad never ceased thinking and praying to God. His lips never ceased moving, it was said, and those who ever slept near him were able to judge whether he was in a state of adoration of Muhammad or repeating praise of God. He often gave his advice, "Make it a practice to be in a state of verbal prayer or remembrance whenever you wake up in the night or change your position."

In the Mirza household there was a ready welcome for any relatives or guests who dropped in for the family was large and, as the founders of the village, naturally the most important. Every visitor was offered a meal. Ahmad did not join them. He still had his meal put in a basket which he hauled up to the window of his room on the first floor. When Mirza Din Muhammad stayed, his meal was also put in the basket. Occasionally another visitor, called Hafiz Mo'i-ud-Din, was there and Ahmad would ask Mirza Din Muhammad to obtain a meal for him also. When Hafiz was finishing Ahmad would often ask him if he would like some more.

"Then Ahmad would give him his own portion – and sometimes mine as well," said Mirza Din Muhammad. "Ahmad ate very slowly, taking a long time over each morsel." Occasionally, when Hafiz had taken too liberal advantage of Ahmad's offer, eating the greater part of both their meals, Ahmad would give Mirza Din Muhammad a small coin to buy some roasted grain which was very cheap. This had to suffice for the rest of the day. Ahmad took very little of this. "He would put a few grains in his mouth and keep munching for a long time," said Mirza Din Muhammad.

An impression that Ahmad was a lonely, cheerless ascetic would be wrong. His friends recall that he talked cheerfully, slapping his high when he wished to emphasise a point. Though many people in the village were afraid to approach Ahmad's gruff, authoritarian father, this was not so with Ahmad. Said Mirza Din Muhammad, "My experience was that he was always sweet tempered. He never became angry. We never had the slightest hesitation or fear in approaching him whenever we wanted to. He never put us off because he was too busy or unwell. We sometimes disturbed him when he was sleeping. Even on such occasions he would get up and open the door, never giving us the feeling that it would have been better if we had not disturbed him.

"Since his door was always kept closed I would sometimes throw some pebbles at it from a distance. Even this small sound was enough to make him open the door."

Mirza Din Muhammad was studying medicine and in one of his books there was a discussion about melancholia, its causes and symptoms. One of the symptoms mentioned was a secluded life. At this Ahmad commented that the doctors had spared no one, categorising people as insane who only led secluded lives.

Mirza Din Muhammad recalls, "I smiled and said laughingly, 'Just as they say about you'."

"Ahmad joined in the laughter, without in any way taking me to task. Later I felt ashamed of this remark, but even then I did not think a formal apology was needed. I knew Ahmad never attached any importance to such things, never keeping anything in his mind with a desire to get even with a person."

Towards the end of 1875 Ahmad was told in a vision that he should now follow the example of the prophets and undertake a fast. In order not to worry his father he decided to do this secretly. He, therefore, arranged with some poor children that they should come below his window at certain times when he would distribute food among them.

He reduced his consumption so that he now took only one meal after sunset. After two or three weeks, he began to reduce the quantity of this meal so that in the end he was eating only a few ounces of bread every 24 hours.

Later Ahmad wrote of this fast, "I continued this discipline over a period of eight or nine months and despite the extreme meagreness of the nourishment that I took God Almighty safeguarded me against every kind of disorder. During this period I experienced many spiritual mysteries. I met several previous prophets and some outstanding Muslim saints who had passed away. On one occasion, in a state of complete wakefulness I beheld the Holy Prophet ... who was accom-

panied by his two grandsons, his daughter Fatima and his cousin and son-in-law Ali. ... This was not any kind of dream but was a species of complete wakefulness.

"Besides this kind of experience, I beheld columns of spiritual light, of different colours, white, green and red, that were beautiful and impressive beyond description. These columns were so related to my heart, that observing them, my heart experienced an ecstasy, the delight of which has no comparison. I imagined that these columns were an illustration of the mutual love between God and man. One light proceeded from the heart and ascended upwards and another light descended from above. When the two met they assumed the shape of a column.

"These are spiritual experiences which are not within the ken of worldly people, but there are those in the world who are given knowledge of such matters.

"Another benefit that I derived from this exercise was that I discovered that, the need arising, I could endure starvation for a long period. I feel that if a strong wrestler were to compete with me in enduring starvation, he would die long before I would need any nourishment.

"I also feel that until a person's body is inured to such hardship he is not capable of experiencing the higher spiritual mysteries. But I would not advise everyone to embark upon such an exercise. Nor did I undertake it on my own volition. I adopted it under divine direction that was conveyed to me in a clear vision. At the end of eight or nine months I terminated it and have since reverted to it only on rare occasions."

By 1876 Ahmad's father, Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, was well advanced into his 80s and as he contemplated death he grew sad at what he declared were his wasted opportunities and his complete devotion to worldly affairs. He related a dream he had had. "I saw Muhammad, the Holy Prophet, coming towards my house. I ran towards him to welcome him and to give him my homage. As I got nearer it occurred to me that I should also give him an offering of some kind and I put my hand in my pocket. But all that I could find was one rupee and when I looked at it I realised it was counterfeit."

Mirza Ghulam Murtaza interpreted this dream as an illustration that when the love of God was mingled with the dross of worldliness then it was like a counterfeit rupee.

He also used to recite a poem by his father, who, dying in exile and dispossessed of all his property, had written, "Whenever I prepare a plan, Fate laughs at my endeavours".

He now often asked Ahmad to read to him in the evenings from the Quran. As a way of making amends for his life he also decided to build a mosque. He tried at first to obtain the return of a former village mosque which, when the Sikhs overran Qadian, had been turned into a Sikh temple. But he lost this last legal case as well.

He, therefore, settled on a vacant site which had been occupied by the local authorities during the Sikh rule. When the owners heard why Mirza Ghulam Murtaza wanted the land they knew he would not be thwarted. So the price was driven up by imaginary other buyers until finally Mirza Ghulam Murtaza paid the then extraordinary sum of 700 rupees. Work started straightaway at the end of 1875 and Mirza Ghulam Murtaza asked that he be buried in the grounds of the mosque so that, if he had not paid much attention to God during his lifetime, he could, in death, hear the word of God being glorified. It might be the means of his procuring forgiveness, he said.

By the middle of 1876 the construction of the mosque was almost complete. Ahmad was in Lahore when suddenly he had a premonition that the death of his father was approaching. He hurried back to Qadian. His father did not look ill but he was in bed suffering from mild dysentery. After staying with him for some hours his father told him that he should go to his room and rest as he had been travelling and it was a very hot day. Ahmad did so. In his room he received a vision that his father would die that same day some time after sunset.

"The news caused me that pang of grief instinctive to humanity and, since some of the important sources of our family income were bound up with his life – the pension and the annuity – the thought also passed through my mind as to what would happen after his death. There came a flutter in my heart that perhaps there would now come days of poverty and pain. All these thoughts passed through my mind like a flash of lightning.

"Immediately there came over me a trance and I had a second revelation. 'Is God not all-sufficient for His servant?'

The Divine revelation was immediately followed by a feeling of mental relief, as though some painful wound had been suddenly healed by a potent ointment ... I understand that God would not allow me to perish."

In the evening after sunset his father died. He was aged between 80 and 85 and, as he had desired, he was buried in the grounds of the mosque.

Ahmad had the words of the revelation carved on a semi-precious stone and made into a signet ring.

He was to talk later about life and death. "Who said that life is long?" he asked. "There is no season for death – it may overtake us at any time. So we must value what time we have. We will not have these times again. There will remain only memories."

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Treasury of Truth

The death of his father gave Ahmad both more and less freedom. His brother, Mirza Ghulam Qadir, took over the management of the estate so Ahmad was free to devote all his time to study. Though the rents should have been divided, it was the elder brother who controlled the finances. When Ahmad asked for money to subscribe to a newspaper he was told they could not afford it.

His brother had much the same attitude as his father to Ahmad's way of life and constantly urged him to find an occupation that would provide him with a reasonable salary. But whereas his father's statements were characterised by an inner softness his brother's were not. He grew impatient at what he considered was Ahmad's dull obduracy.

His brother's wife was totally antagonistic towards Ahmad and, since the elder brother was away for seven to 10 days at a time, it was she who controlled the household. Ahmad's food was now what was left over from other people's meals. Ahmad recalled this period in a sentence which ran "There was a time when my usual fare on which I lived consisted of the remains from the tables of others."

Ahmad suffered seven years of this constant humiliation. However he had enough to live on and could now devote all his time to finishing the writing of Braheen-i-Ahmadiyya. He had no funds to pay for its publication – commercial publishers did not exist at that time in India – but an appeal for financial help secured enough to pay for the printing of

the first two parts. They appeared in 1880. The response was spectacular.

The book contained 300 arguments about the truth of Islam. The verses, quoted at appropriate places in the book, amounted to some two-third of the Quran. Said one reviewer, admittedly a friend of Ahmad's, "The book convinces the disbelievers, activates the indifferent, warns the neglectful, perfects the understanding of the believers, strengthens the roots of Islamic doctrines and wipes out the doubts that are expressed by the opponents of Islam."

All kinds of Islamic scholars were equally enthusiastic. Muhammad Hussain, his friend in Batala, wrote a two hundred page review. "In our opinion, keeping in mind this age and its circumstances, this is a book the equal of which has not been published in Islam to this day, whatever might happen hereafter. The author has proved himself so steadfast in the service of Islam through his pen, his money and his tongue, that few such instances are to be found among Muslims.

"The author of Braheen Ahmadiyya, according to the testimony of friends and foes, regulates his life according to the law of Islam and is a pious and truthful person. It is well-known that Satanic suggestions are mostly false, but not one of the revelations received by the author of Braheen Ahmadiyya has been proved false up to this day...Can any Muslim follower of the Quran believe that Satan can be given knowledge, like the Prophets and the angels, of that which is hidden, so that not one of his disclosures of the hidden should lack truth?"

He concluded with the following appeal. "The excellence of this book and its benefit for Islam will be recognised by those who read it with an open mind...Therefore, acting upon the principle that the only return for beneficence is beneficence, we wish to point that helping the publication of this book through contributions towards the cost of

printing, is a duty laid upon the entire Muslim community.

"The author of Braheen Ahmadiyya has, by writing this book, safeguarded the honour of the Muslims and has challenged the opponents of Islam emphatically and forcefully. He has announced to the whole world that anyone who doubts the truth of Islam should come to him and should witness the intellectual and spiritual proofs based upon the Quran and the miraculous manifestation of the prophethood of Muhammad in support of the truth of Islam."

Another Muslim divine wrote, "Islam is being attacked from all directions. Atheism is flourishing and irreligion is on the increase. Those of the (Hindu) Brahmo Samaj are making every effort to establish the superiority of their creed over Islam through their philosophic writings. Our Christian brothers are devoting the whole of their efforts towards wiping out Islam. They are convinced that so long as the sun of Islam continues to shed its light upon the world all the efforts on behalf of Christianity would prove vain and trinity would gain no support. In short, the followers of all religions are eager to put out the light of Islam.

"We had been most anxious over a long period that of the body of Muslim divines someone, who may be inspired by God to stand up in support and defence of the faith, should write a book which should be in accord with the need of the times, and which should set out, on the basis of reason and spiritual arguments, to prove that the Holy Quran is the Word of God and the Holy Prophet was a righteous Prophet of God. We are deeply grateful to God that this desire of ours has at last been fulfilled. Here is the book, the writing of which we had been awaiting a long time. Its title is Braheen Ahmadiyya and the author has set out in it 300 conclusive arguments in proof of the truth of the Holy Quran and the prophethood of Muhammad...".

The author of this book is the best of divines, pride of the Muslims of India, the accepted one of God Almighty ... God be praised! What a wonderful compilation this is, whose every word proves the truth of Islam and displays the righteousness of the Quran and the prophethood of Muhammad. The opponents of Islam have been presented with bright, conclusive arguments. Every claim is reasonable and is supported by brilliant arguments of a character so positive that no one can question them and everyone must yield to them provided everyone approaches them with a just and open mind.

"The author has proved the truth of Islam by such positive arguments that every just person would acknowledge that the Quran is the book of God, that the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet is righteous, that Islam is a faith established by God.

"There is such a multiplicity of proofs that no way of escape and no way of denial has been left open to an opponent. Every argument is clear. Every proof is bright. The book is a mirror of faith and is full of the Quran to the brim. It leads to the straight path. It is a torch that lights up the true way. It is a treasury of truth. It is a mine of guidance. It acts as lightning on the stores of the enemy and burns up all his arguments. For the Muslims it is a strong support for the Holy Book and it is a bright proof of the Mother of the Book. It has unsettled and disturbed every enemy of religion."

Muslims were proud of this champion of Islam, but many Hindus and Christians believed that their faiths had been traduced. One Hindu newspaper was to write later, "His literary capacity is well accepted. He has written many books and these are scholarly."

But at that moment Pandit Lekh Ram, of the Hindu Arya Samaj sect, counter-attacked with a book entitled Refutation of Braheen Ahmadiyya.

He was to reappear tragically some years later in Ahmad's life.

CHAPTER NINE

Revelations of the Future

The marriage of Ahmad and Hurmat Bibi was never resumed. His brother and his wife – still childless – now looked upon Ahmad's two sons as their own. When Ahmad returned from Sialkot he moved back into his old single room in the male section of the house. For some 26 years he lived as a bachelor. In 1881, however, when he was 46 years old, he received a revelation that, at some time in the future, he would become a father again. He had started to receive revelations some time before the death of his father.

"We give thee glad tidings of a handsome son," was the revelation. Some months later he received another revelation: "Be grateful for My bounty that thou hast found my Khadeejah".

Khadeejah was the name of the first wife of Muhammad and Ahmad therefore realised that God intended him to marry again. He later received another revelation: "All praise belongs to God who has bestowed upon you a noble relationship through marriage and a noble descent."

On November 17, 1884 he married Nusrat Jahan Begum. Her name in English means "the lady who helps the whole world". Her father, who had known Ahmad for many years, was not totally certain that the marriage would be a success. There was the difference in age. His reputation of being completely indifferent to money was understandably not an asset in the eyes of his prospective father-in-law. But it was to be a long, happy and fruitful marriage. She bore him four sons and two daughters.

His friends were worried when he first announced that he was contemplating taking a second wife, for his health was not good – he suffered from diabetes and migrain and had only recently recovered from what was thought to be tuberculosis. Ahmad himself was conscious of the difficulties that a second marriage might entail. He wrote later, ''On account of the retired life that I led, my mind shrank from undertaking the responsibilities of married life. In this pitiful condition I received a revelation: ''I shall provide all that may be needed in respect of your marriage''.

''God so blessed me that I was convinced that he had bestowed on me the full health and strength that are enjoyed by a person in normal health ... were I not afraid that I might be suspected of exaggeration, I would set out in detail the miraculous change that was brought about in me so that it might be known that the signs of our Powerful God are exhibited in every shape and form, particularly for those of His servants whom He esteems.''

Ahmad's new wife was anxious to please and when she discovered that he was especially fond of a kind of rice pudding, made with thick, raw sugar in the form of molasses, she decided to surprise him. Not having the recipe she used at least four times the amount of sugar needed and the result was more like a sugar jelly than a rice pudding.

She was contemplating the awful result when Ahmad came in, she recalled. He looked at her and could see that she was distressed. He then said that he liked rice pudding made with a lot of sugar and ate it with what appeared to be relish. ''He kept on talking to me until my anguish and concern had gone,'' she said.

He was to value not only her love but her sage advice as the years went on and often quoted Muhammad's counsel: ''He is the best among you who is the best in behaviour to his wife''.

There is an immense recollection of their "perfect and ideal" marriage. Her younger brother recalled that from his earliest childhood he could never remember Ahmad exchanging a harsh word with his sister. He always addressed her in the politest form of Urdu, whereas he spoke in the Punjabi dialect with their children.

The revelation that he was to marry again had come in 1881, but it was not fulfilled until 1884. In between had come the revelation that he was the Reformer of The Age. It was a title that many Muslims were already according him.

This was how he described the revelation which he said told him of his future task. "One night I was busy writing, when a feeling of drowsiness overtook me and I went to sleep. At that time I saw The Holy Prophet Muhammad. His face shone like the full moon. He came close to me and I felt as though he wished to embrace me. I witnessed that rays of light came forth from him and penetrated into me. I could see those rays of light just in the same manner as we see this common light and I felt that I was seeing those rays not only with my spiritual eyes, but with my physical eyes as well.

"After The Holy Prophet had embraced me I felt as if I could not say whether or not The Holy Prophet had separated from me following that embrace. Then the doors of Revelation were thrown open on me and my Lord said to me, "O Ahmad, God has blessed thee. So the blow which thou has dealt to the enemy was not dealt by thee but by God. God has endowed thee with knowledge of the Holy Quran that thou should warn those whose forefathers had not been warned, and that the way of transgressors should become plain and evident.

"'Tell the people that you have been called to a Divine Mission and that you are yourself the first to believe in that Mission.'"

The "blow" referred to was, of course, the publication of the Braheen Ahmadiyya and its repudiation of other religions.

CHAPTER TEN

Forty Days of Solitude

Ahmad continued to receive further revelations from God, he said, and in 1883, a year after the publication of Braheen Ahmadiyya, God told him that he now held among men the position of Jesus.

This was how Ahmad disclosed the revelation. "The writer has been given the knowledge that he is the Mojaddid Reformer of this era and that spiritually his qualities and attributes resemble the qualities and attributes of Messiah, the son of Mary, the two of us closely and intensely resembling each other. From the blessing of my obedience to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, as a sample of the attributes of Prophets, I have been given preference in rank and position over many of the eminent men who have gone before.

"To walk in my footsteps now is a source of blessing while to go in opposition is a source of disappointment and despair."

Ahmad now waited for further revelations. He knew he needed further guidance and resolved to undertake chilla, as it is known in Islam, a period of 40 days of solitude, prayer and contemplation in which communion is sought with God.

This period of 40 days has been recognised among holy men down through the ages. Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. Jesus was in the desert for 40 days and nights. Innumerable other men of God have sought guidance during a like period of prayer and contemplation.

However, Ahmad did not know where he should undertake chilla and it was not until January, 1886, that God told

him that he should go to the little town of Hoshiarpur. A citizen of that town, when he heard that Ahmad wanted to come there, offered him the use of a small, two-storied house on the outskirts of the town. Ahmad accepted and, at the end of January, 1886, left for Hoshiarpur in a bullock-driven cart.

Three companions, who had asked to be allowed to go with him, accompanied him. As they crossed the river Beas in a very old-fashioned and leaky boat Ahmad remarked that accompanying a holy man on such a journey as he was now undertaking was like crossing a river – there was the hope of a safe landfall on the other side. But there was also the danger of being drowned!

Ahmad told his companions that one of them should bring up his two daily meals and should put them down and leave without speaking. No one should be allowed to come to talk to him, he said. After his vigil was over he would stay in the house for a number of other days – he did not know how many – and anyone who wanted could come at that time. Ahmad left the house only on Fridays when they went to an isolated mosque situated in a park outside the town. There Ahmad led the Zuhur, i.e. one o'clock prayers.

Ahmad did not talk to his companions about what happened during this period, but it has always been considered that this was a prelude and preparation to his official inauguration as God's ambassador to the world. The ''mighty sign'' which Ahmad had sought from God was also granted to him and this was delivered to the world in February, 1886.

''God Almighty, the Lord of Honour and Glory, Merciful, Benevolent, Exalted, Who has the power to do all that He wills (glory be to him and Exalted be His Name) has vouchsafed to me the following revelation:

''I confer upon thee a sign of my Mercy according to thy entreaties and have honoured thy prayers with acceptance through My mercy and have blessed this thy journey.

A Sign of power, mercy and nearness to me is bestowed upon thee, a Sign of grace and beneficence is awarded to thee, and thou are granted the key of success and victory....

"Rejoice therefore," the revelation continued, "that a handsome and pure boy will be bestowed upon thee. Thou will receive an intelligent youth who will be of thy seed and thy progency...He has been invested with a holy spirit and will be free from all impurity...He will be extremely intelligent and understanding and will be meek of heart and will be filled with secular and spiritual knowledge...His fame will spread to the ends of the world...and people will be blessed through him. He will then be raised to his spiritual station in heaven. This is a matter decreed.

"Thy house will be filled with blessings...I will cause a great increase in thy progeny...thy progeny will spread greatly in different lands. Thy progeny...will flourish to the end of days. God will maintain thy name with honour till the day when the world comes to an end and will convey thy message to the ends of the earth".

These last words were taken as the most important words in the revelation. God not only wanted Ahmad to defend Islam. God now wanted Ahmad to spread the news of Islam throughout the world and He would ensure that it was carried throughout the world.

The revelation continued, "I shall exalt thee and call thee to Myself, but thy name will never be erased from the face of the earth...all those who seek to humiliate thee and to cause thee to fail and wish to ruin thee will be frustrated and will die, being brought to naught. I will cause an increase of thy true sincere friends and will bless their lives and their properties and they will grow in number, and they will always prevail over others who are jealous of thee and are hostile to thee.

"Thou art to Me as the prophets of the children of Israel. Thou art to Me as My Unity. Thou art of Me and I am of thee. The time is approaching...when God will put thy love in

the hearts of kings and nobles, so much so that they will seek blessings from thy garments..."

A month later, on March 22nd, 1886, he stated, "This is not only a prophecy. It is a grand Heavenly Sign which Almighty God has shown for demonstrating the truth and greatness of the gently and compassionate prophet Muhammad...This Sign is a hundred times greater, better, more perfect, more exalted and more complete than bringing a dead one back to life. Such an event, the possibility of which is open to question, merely means to bring a spirit back to life by supplication to God. In this instance God, the Almighty, has promised to send a blessed spirit whose manifest and hidden blessings will spread throughout the earth..."

A year after the revelation of Hoshiarpur Ahmad was directed to lay the foundations of the Community. But it was not until December, 1888, that he announced this in public. The following month, on January 12, 1889, he gave the 10 conditions on which the Ahmaddiyya Community would be founded.

The members of the Community would vow that:

In their worship nothing should be associated with God.

They would keep away from falsehood, adultery, cruelty, dishonesty, rebellion and would not allow themselves to be carried away by their passions.

They would perform the five daily acts of worship.

They would do no harm to God's creatures in general, and to Muslims in particular, neither by their hands, their tongue or any other means.

In joy or sorrow, in prosperity and in adversity, they would be faithful to God and ready to endure every insult and pain and in the hour of misfortune would not turn away from God but rather draw closer to Him.

They would not follow vulgar customs and would guard against evil inclinations.

They would discard pride and haughtiness and pass their days in humility, lowliness, courtesy and meekness.

They would hold their religion and the dignity and welfare of Islam dearer than life, wealth and even their children.

For the grace of God they would have sympathy for all His creatures and would devote their natural ability to the promotion of their welfare.

And finally, declared Ahmad, they would establish a relationship of brotherhood with him on condition of obeying him in all good things and should adhere to it till death and this relationship would be of such a high order that the like of it would not be found in other worldly relationships.

Two months later Ahmad went to Ludhianna and on March 23, 1889, the formal inauguration began. The former physician, Nurud Din, was the first to grasp the right hand of Ahmad and make the vow. He had been building a clinic in Bhera when he had heard of Ahmad's preaching and had travelled to Qadian to talk to him. He had intended staying only one night, but at Ahmad's invitation he stayed for a few days. The "few days" became a few weeks. Then he sent for his library and gave instructions for his half-finished clinic to be sold. He lived in Qadian for the rest of his life. When Ahmad died, and by this time God had revealed to him that he was The Promised Messiah, Nurud Din became the First Successor to the Promised Messiah.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Where Did Jesus Die?

The pledge of allegiance to Ahmad at Ludhianna in 1889 took place 9 years after Braheen-i-Ahmadiyya was published. The inauguration of the covenant was in no sense a declaration by Ahmad that he was anything other than the Reformer of the Age – God had appointed him to serve the cause of Islam by pointing out false beliefs and ways that had grown on to Islam like barnacles. They had to be struck hard in order to dislodge them.

There have been many accepted reformers since the prophethood of Muhammad, usually at the beginning or end of each century. Ahmad declared that he was the Reformer of the 14th century of Islam and that his reformation had to be carried out in the spirit of Jesus.

In a letter to Maulvi Nurud Din in 1885 he wrote that he had been "commissioned by God to try, in the spirit of the prophet of Nazareth, the Israelite Messiah, to regenerate mankind through perfect humility, meekness, humbleness and solicitude and to show the straight path to those unaware of the way; by walking in which true salvation is attained and, in this very world, are seen the signs of heavenly life and the rays of acceptance and belovedness."

At this time Ahmad did not claim that he was the Mahdi or Guide. Nor did he claim that he was a prophet or Messenger of God. And he most certainly did not claim that he was the Messiah promised for mankind in all the major faiths of the world.

As to the covenant many holy men had allowed their followers to take up a covenant at their hands. So the announcement and the ceremony at Ludhianna raised no opposition from Muslim divines.

A Muslim scholar has written, "In fact, he was regarded as a great general of Islam, a holy man of uncommon piety and great virtue and one imbued with a moving enthusiasm for the service of Islam. He was thus looked upon as a great stalwart of the faith and its powerful defender.

"Non-Muslims also regarded him as an outstanding Islamic general and were deeply conscious of his forceful writings."

But this acceptance by all Muslims of his role as a noble defender of Islam was not to endure for long.

The great controversy was about to break. At the end of 1890, some 18 months after the taking of the first covenant, Ahmad revealed that he had had a new revelation from God. Jesus Christ was not alive in Heaven.

The immensity of this statement was as shocking for Muslims as for Christians. For though Christians believed that Jesus, as the Son of God, was alive in Heaven and would come again to the world, Muslims believed equally firmly that he was physically alive in Heaven beside God and would come down before the Day of Judgement to punish the unrighteous and establish for ever the Kingdom of God.

God had not only revealed to him that Jesus was dead, as all mortal men must die whatever their piety or holiness, said Ahmad. God had also revealed to him that a great reformer would come to the world in the spirit of Jesus. God had told him that he was that chosen person. The exact revelation was:

> "The Messiah, son of Mary, Prophet of God, is dead. It is thou who has appeared in his spirit, according to the promise. And the promise of God is ever fulfilled."

The Muslim divines were outraged and Ahmad was denounced as a heretic, an imposter and an enemy of the Faith. The storm of controversy did not shake him and he answered them with a reasoned exposition, calling to his side the evidence contained in the Holy Quran. Not a single verse upheld the view that Jesus was taken physically alive into Heaven, he said, but there were many that said Jesus had died.

Muhammad had died, so why should they believe that Jesus was physically still alive? Ahmad asked. He suggested that Muslims had been misled by certain allegorical expressions and that, unfortunately, over the centuries, the belief of Christians in a Jesus living in Heaven had also slowly been added on to the true beliefs of Islam.

Jesus himself had pointed out that the second coming of Elijah had been fulfilled by the coming of John the Baptist. In the same way his coming fulfilled the promise about the return of Jesus.

Ahmad said that as well as being the Messiah he was also the Guide or Mahdi who was promised at the same time. These were not two separate people, he said, but two offices held by the same person. The promise that the Mahdi would kill all infidels and convert all nations to Islam did not mean that he would convert them by the terror of the sword, but that, gifted with powerful and cogent arguments, he would defeat all his opponents and prove the superiority of Islam.

The most important battle he had to win, Ahmad often declared, was to convince Christians of their grievous error in considering Jesus as God or part of God. Jesus had been a mortal man and a prophet just as Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist had been mortal men and prophets. Jesus himself had never thought of himself as anything but a prophet. Nor had his disciples.

Many of the original books of the Bible only said that Jesus was a prophet, said Ahmad, but these had been suppressed

by the Church leaders when they had decided, in various meetings, which Acts of the Apostles should be included in the Bible and which should not. This "editing" of the Bible by religious conferences was one of the elemental differences between the Bible and the Quran, said Ahmad. The Bible was the work of many men over more than a hundred years and had been shaped and altered by church conferences over the following few hundred years.

The Quran, on the other hand, was the revealed word of God.

It was a long time after the death of Jesus, said Ahmad, that Christians had started to use words that implied that Jesus was himself God, as part of the Trinity. To worship a mere man, prophet though he was, was a grievous sin, said Ahmad. Only God can be worshipped. God was unique and alone. No one could be associated with God.

Merely to say that Jesus was dead was not enough, however. Ahmad therefore sought insight from God as to what had truly happened at the Crucifixion. Eight years later, in 1898, after much study, Ahmad announced that though Jesus had indeed been crucified he had not died on the Cross. He had fallen unconscious because of the intense pain he was suffering from the nails driven through his hands and feet.

The Roman soldiers thought that he was dead – which was unlikely because he had only been on the Cross for a few hours and some people who were crucified stayed alive for days. Even so, they would normally have employed crurifragium to ensure that he was dead. This entailed breaking the crucified person's legs so that he could no longer rest his feet on the small ledge of wood below them. As a result he had to hang by his hands alone, the pain was immense and he became unconscious and death followed shortly from heart failure.

The disciples of Jesus had ensured that he would not be treated in that way, said Ahmad. Instead his side was pierced

with a lance and blood and water gushed forth. That itself was a sign that his heart was still working and blood was circulating through his body. When he was placed in the large, airy burial chamber – after his body was rubbed with reviving herbs and ointments – he gradually recovered.

Down through the centuries many people have speculated that Jesus was alive when taken down from the Cross and commented on the fact that he was taken for a gardener, that he looked so ill that Thomas was not convinced that he was really Jesus until he had put his fingers in the holes caused by the nails. Doctors have discussed whether the blood and water was from immense blisters raised by his earlier scourging while more recent medical knowledge has allowed them to discuss the exact medical conditions that would arise during a crucifixion.

On one thing, however, doctors are totally agreed. It would be perfectly medically possible for Jesus to have survived his crucifixion and to have sufficiently recovered three days later to meet and talk with his disciples.

God had revealed to him, said Ahmad, that not only did Jesus survive Crucifixion, but also where Jesus went after he disappeared from the sight of his disciples, when he finally died and, most important of all, where he was buried.

Jesus had always maintained that he was sent only as a prophet for the people of Israel and not as a prophet for the whole of mankind. Thus he is reported as saying (Mathew:15, 24) "I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel". And again, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold...they shall hear my voice," (John 10,16).

In the great Diaspora, some 700 years before the birth of Christ, the 10 tribes of Israel had been scattered. Not all

had returned. It was, therefore, to these lost tribes that Jesus was referring, said Ahmad. He could no longer stay in Palestine, because he would have been immediately rearrested once he revealed himself. But he may well have still been there 12 months after his supposed crucifixion when Saul, later Paul, was converted. Indeed some people have concluded that Paul's conversion dates from an actual meeting with Jesus and it was after that Jesus set out on his journeyings to find the lost tribes of Israel.

Ahmad was convinced that Paul knew that Jesus had left the country and, perhaps accidentally, misinterpreted his instructions. It was Paul who first propounded the divinity of Jesus and so, said Ahmad, introduced polytheism.

Jesus and some disciples, said Ahmad, reached the city of Nasibin, which is some 450 miles from Jerusalem. He then journeyed on through Persia into Afghanistan, visited Tibet and several parts of India before finally arriving and staying in Kashmir. Jesus was named the Masih, which is Arabic for traveller and is known as the Chief of the Travellers because he travelled about so much, says a Muslim writer. And in Kansul-Ummal, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, it is related that God sent a warning to Jesus in the following revelation: ''O Jesus, move from one place to another lest thou shouldst be recognised and persecuted''.

In Kashmir Jesus was revered as a great prophet under the name of Yus Asaph. The word 'Yus' is another form of 'Yuyu' which means Jesus in the Old Persian language. ''Asaph'' is a Biblical name meaning ''collector'' or ''gatherer''. Jesus's mission, as he himself said, was to gather in the lost tribes of Israel.

There is much evidence pointing to the arrival of at least one of the tribes of Israel in the Punjab and Afghanistan and of a strongly Semitic influence. There are many words and

names of villages and towns which correspond to those mentioned in the Bible; many travellers have remarked on the Semitic appearance of men and women and, perhaps most important of all, the people of Afghanistan, and other places between Iran and Kashmir, call themselves Bani Israel, meaning the sons of Israel.

Ahmad said that Jesus had lived in Kashmir, a country described by writers through the centuries as a paradise on earth: snow-capped mountains, tumbling waterfalls and fruit trees of all descriptions in the valleys. There he died, as related in the Quran. He was buried in a tomb which now lies in the street known as Khan Yar in the town of Srinagar.

Recent researches have revealed that carved in the floor of the tomb are of the outlines of feet pierced in the centre as though with nails and that there are many crucifix-like incisions in nearby places. There are other possible mentions of Jesus. In North West India at a placed called Taxila an inscription has been found in Aramaic which reads, ''Dear foreign carpenter, Pious devotee of the Son of God, built this palace of cedar and ivory for the king''.

In 115 A.D., thus less than 100 years after the reputed death of Christ, a historian called Sutta wrote a book in Sanskrit entitled Bhavisya-ma-purana, which relates that a king who ruled over the valleys of the Kashmir between the years 39 – 50 A.D., was out riding one day when he met a stranger who wore white robes. The king asked his name and the stranger replied ''I am known as the Son of God and born of a virgin''.

The stranger told the king that he had suffered much because he had preached the word of God. The king then asked him which religion he preached. A translation of the stranger's reply is below. It is worth knowing beforehand, however, that the Mleechas is another word for foreigners.

> When the truth had vanished,
> And all bounds of propriety crossed;

In the land of the Mleechas
I appeared as Isha-Masih
I received the Messiah-hood,
In the land of the Mleechas''

And he ends his answer:

Perfect, pure and blissful frame of God
Has entered into my heart;
Thus my name has been established,
And promulgated as Isha-Masih.

Ahmad's revelation about the travels and death of Jesus in India were to strengthen the faith of his followers. But they were to unite other Muslims and Christians against him.

CHAPTER TWELVE

An Enemy of God

Ahmad declared that both the Bible and the Quran supported his revelation that Jesus would not come again to the world, but that someone would come in his spirit.

"Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 24:39) clearly meant, said Ahmad, that Jesus would not reappear himself, but another person would appear in his name.

And Abu Huraira, one of the companions of Muhammad reported that Muhammad had told them, "It is just possible that he who lives of you might meet Jesus, the son of Mary, who is the Mahdi and a just judge..."

This meant quite clearly, said Ahmad, that the person who would come to the world in the role of Jesus would also be the Mahdi.

When Jesus did come again he would "break the Cross and kill the swine". This did not necessarily mean, it was argued, that Christians would be killed. It was a way of saying that the mistakes made about the Crucifixion would be refuted by reason and by argument. By equally pacific means he would rid the world of avarice – the sin of the "swine".

Muhammad had added that the prophet who would return in the spirit of Jesus would come "from among yourselves". This was a clear indication, said Ahmad, that The Promised Messiah would neither descend from Heaven, as Christians believed, nor would he be physically the same son of Mary who had lived 19 centuries earlier as many Muslims believed.

The Messiah promised to the world would, therefore, come in the spirit of Jesus, said Ahmad, and he would come from the Muslims themselves.

Muslims were Ahmad's first audience and it was, therefore, from them that there came the most violent denunciations of his revelation that he was The Promised Messiah. He was a heretic, outside the pale of Islam and an enemy of the Faith, said the Muslim divines.

Not all the denunciations had the desired effect, of course. A man called Mian Nizam Din heard one religious leader state that Ahmad had contracted leprosy because of his insults to Muhammad. He decided to visit Qadian to see for himself and found Ahmad well and thriving. Mian Nizam Din became one of Ahmad's 313 Companions.

In reply to the denunciations – and the first had come from his old schoolfellow Muhammad Hussain – Ahmad issued a statement from Ludhianna on March 26th, 1891. It said, "Of a truth Jesus, son of Mary, is dead and his soul is resting with John the Baptist's soul in the second heaven. The Messiah for this age, whose advent in the spiritual sense was foretold in the authentic traditions, is myself. This is the doing of God."

Muhammad Hussain was to say that it was his praise that had called the attention of the Muslim world to Ahmad. It was his doing that Ahmad was talked about as a possible saint and a recipient of God's will.

There were several attempts to arrange a debate between Ahmad and Muhammad Hussain and finally it was arranged to start on July 20th, 1891, at a house owned by a Muslim divine. The debate was to last 12 days and was to be conducted by means of signed papers which would be written by Ahmad and Muhammad Hussain and then exchanged and read aloud to the audience.

There was much discussion about preliminary matters before the debate started. Ahmad finally issued a statement to define the doctrines he was defending and those which had been wrongfully alleged against him.

''Be it known that the only matter which is under dispute is the belief that Jesus is still alive in the flesh in the Heavens. I do not believe it. There is nothing in the Quran or the authentic sayings to support it. The other accusations...are all entirely false and unfounded. My beliefs are exactly the same as those held by the orthodox community...in short all other objections levelled against me – excepting my claim to prove the death of Jesus and to be The Promised Messiah – are wrong, absurd and based on misunderstanding.''

At the end of the debate Ahmad issued a challenge. ''Those who look upon me as an imposter and regard themselves as righteous and pious souls know that I am prepared to vindicate my position against them according to the Quranic verse, ''Do ye work according to your ability; I too will work''.

''Let us fix 40 days for this purpose and seek some heavenly distinction, and the one who comes out righteous in this matter and is able to reveal some divine secrets, through His assistance, shall be considered truthful.

''Listen to me, all ye who are present here, that I declare on a most solemn oath, that if Muhammad Hussain can, by turning to God, show any heavenly signs or reveal any divine secrets as I can do, I shall be prepared to be slaughtered.

''A Warner came into the world and the world accepted him not. But God will accept him and will establish his truth with mighty signs.''

Some 300 to 500 people had attended the debates each day – including the editors of two local daily newspapers. There was so much shouting and jeering that often little could be heard when the discourses were read out. Some of the

spectators had stones concealed in their clothing and these clattered on to the platform where the two men worked. Most were obviously aimed at Ahmad.

Outside the house where the debate took place a huge crowd gathered on the final day, many of them brandishing knives and sticks. The local magistrate decided that a riot was likely to result and ordered that the meeting be closed. A vehicle had been ordered for Ahmad and his party, but the drivers were too frightened to come through the crowd. As a result Ahmad was forced to wait in the middle of a crowd that every minute seemed more threatening. Finally the superintendent of police arrived with force of constables and opened a way through the crowd for him.

Even in the house where he was staying Ahmad was not safe. The mob encircled the house and tried to batter down the doors. They were repulsed. Then they tried to storm the house again, this time occupying the defenders at the doors and windows while others climbed up ladders and got on to the flat roof. Some managed to fight their way into the house, but were ejected after a fierce struggle.

Muhammad Hussain was the main mob orator and, as a result, the District Magistrate ordered him to leave town.

The news of Ahmad's claim that he was the Promised Messiah and the emotion stirred up during the 12 days debate had now made him known in every part of the Punjab and nearby provinces. His following was still small, but the march forward had begun. And the vituperation intensified.

Shortly afterwards it was no longer only vituperation. The Muslim divines issued decrees stating that Ahmad and his followers could no longer be considered as Muslims. They declared that it was now unlawful to greet Ahmad or any of his followers or indeed to have any kind of contact with them. Marriages between the followers of Ahmad and other Muslims were now forbidden as was the burial of his followers in Muslim graveyards.

One decree declared "The Mirza of Qadian is one of the anti-Christ foretold in the sayings of the Holy Prophet. Muslims should shun such lying hypocrites and should not treat with him in religious matters...Nor should they seek his company nor follow him in prayers nor offer his funeral prayer...He, and people like him, are thieves of the Faith and are liars and accursed Satans...There is no doubt about the heresy of this lying Qadiani...He is an infidel...he is the worst of creatures...he is an enemy of God...and God is his enemy...whoever believes in the Qadiani is also rejected by God..."

Another decree issued by Muslim divines declared that marriages of any women married to a follower of Ahmad were now dissolved. "Anyone who so wishes can marry them," it said.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Christian Confrontation

The accusation that he was an enemy of God and of His prophets was the charge that hurt Ahmad most. He wrote, "They call me heretic, Satan and innovator. These are strange names that I have earned because I grieve for the good of Islam. My cherished Ahmad. I swear by thy face, for thy sake alone did I take up this burden."

He answered the other charges, quoting extensively from the Quran, the sayings of Muhammad, the Bible and other recognised sources to support his claim. And he now journeyed to major cities like Delhi and Lahore to bring the people the message of his prophethood.

God granted him repeated assurances of His support in further revelations, Ahmad declared. One was, "Thou wilt appear as one vanquished but shall triumph in the end and thine shall be the final victory...God hath willed to spread thy uniqueness, thy greatness and thy perfection...God shall reveal thy face and shall lengthen thy shadow...I shall glorify thee unto the corners of the earth and shall exalt thy name and shall cause men to love thee."

Ahmad also received the revelation that among his tasks was the conversion of the West. "The rising of the sun from the West means that Western countries, which have for centuries been in the darkness of unbelief and error, shall be illumined by the sun of righteousness, and shall share in the blessings of Islam."

In less than a decade Ahmad was to set about the conversion of the West. However the confrontation with Christians had already begun. The Church of England's Church Missionary Society had established a base in India as early as 1799. It was followed by many other and varied missionary organisations including the Church of Scotland, the American United Presbyterian Church, English Baptists, American methodists and the United Brethren of Germany.

By 1851 there were 19 different missionary societies working in India and by the 1890s this had grown to some 73 missionary societies and a considerable number of missionaries not attached to any society. In 1851 it was calculated there were some 91,000 Indian Christians. Only thirty years later, in 1881, this had more than quadrupled to 41,711,372.

In 1882 the Rev Dr Henry Martyn Clark established a branch of the Church Missionary Society's Medical Mission in the village of Jandiyala in the district of Amritsar. There had been missionaries there since 1854 but they had enjoyed only partial success. At first they encountered little opposition for the missionaries preached the love of God. Then the tenor of their message changed and they talked of how mistaken Islam was – and its follies. From around 1890 the villagers no longer stayed silent when the missionaries began calling into question the validity of Islam. They raised objections and asked questions. The previous cordiality of life broke down. Tempers and fists were raised.

Dr Martyn Clark, who trained as a doctor after taking a first degree, decided that the best way to propagate Christianity was to hold a public debate. It is not presuming too much to think that his intention was to expose the villagers's limited knowledge of Islam and, at the same time, highlight the advantages of Christianity.

He therefore, put the proposal for a debate to the village elders. They passed his letter to Ahmad who wrote accepting.

Dr Martyn Clarke did not want a debate with Ahmad. He immediately had a leaflet printed at the American Mission Press in Ludhianna which was distributed throughout the village. It was also reproduced as an advertisement in a local newspaper. Ahmad was not considered a Muslim so how could he represent Islam, said Dr Clark. He referred to the arguments and statements made by Muhammad Hussain. But the village elders stuck to their decision – they wanted Ahmad to represent them. A deputation met Dr Clark in Amritsar. Jandiyala was a small village, they pointed out. They had no one there who was sufficiently learned who could act for them. They wanted Ahmad.

Dr Clark conceded the point.

It was agreed that the debate would be divided into two parts, each of six days. It would start at 6 a.m. – in order to take advantage of the coolness of the morning – and finish at 11 a.m. Only 20 Christians and 20 Muslims would be admitted and the agreed subjects of the debate would be strictly adhered to.

This debate was referred to as the Holy War by the Christians and when another missionary, the Rev Robert Clark, wrote his memoirs some years later under the title of "The Missions of the CMS in the Punjab and Sindh" he called it "the great controversy"

The subjects to be debated in the first six days were that each religion should prove its truth by living signs and, secondly, the entire question of the divinity of Jesus. The first subject had been accepted reluctantly by the Christians who declared that fresh miracles were not necessary to show the truth of Christianity. But if Ahmad could produce any miracles, they said, they would be glad to witness them and would immediately become his followers.

Ahmad laid down a fundamental principle for the debate; that the advocate of a religion should put forward its claims

with reasons derived from the recognised scriptures of the religion.

He referred to the Quranic verse which refutes the divinity of Jesus with an appeal to human experience and inductive truth. All messengers of God – including those in the Old Testament – have been human beings, he declared. Unless it was shown that there has actually been an instance which definitely contradicted human experience then the mere claim of Jesus to divinity could not be accepted as true.

His opponent, Mr Abdulla Athim, contended that reason and experience could not be the sole guides of faith. Man cannot understand the doctrine of the Trinity, he declared, but Jesus was called the Son of God in the Bible.

This, for Ahmad, was begging the question.

Early on in the debate the Christians said that Jesus had been able to cure the blind and the maimed. If Ahmad was truly The Promised Messiah then surely he could do the same. On the last day the Christians brought this up again. Prove to us now that you are truly The Promised Messiah and the like of Jesus they said.

At that moment three men were brought into the room. One was blind, the second was lame and the third was dumb.

The room fell silent. Ahmad did not hesitate. It was the Christian scriptures that spoke of Jesus restoring sight to the blind, speech to the dumb and the lame being able to walk again. Personally he did not believe it. But he was sure that all the Christians in the audience sincerely believed it. He was also certain that they had read in the Bible what Jesus was reported as saying when his disciples questioned him about it. Had he not told them that if they only had as much faith as a mustard seed then they too could make the blind see and the dumb talk merely by laying their hands on them.''

Now was their opportunity to prove their faith. If they did so then he would immediately recognise the truth of

Christianity. The Christians who had laughed at the clever trap they thought they had prepared for Ahmad fell silent.

The three men were hustled out of the room.

At the end of the debate Ahmad pointed out that Mr Athim in his book "The Inner Meaning of the Bible" said that Muhammad was an Anti-Christ. God had given him the revelation that the person in the debate who was deliberately following a falsehood would be thrown into Hell within 15 months.

When Athim heard the prophecy he turned pale and, in the Eastern manner of portraying absolute denial, touched both his ears, stuck out his tongue and shook his head. "I repent. I repent. I did not mean to be disrespectful," he declared.

There was no doubt about who had won the debate. An American missionary reporting the debate in a newspaper said that the replies of the Christian debater had been inadequate.

A number of people were to appear regularly during the lifetime of Ahmad. The first was Muhammad Hussain; the second was Lekh Ram of the Arya Samaj Hindu sect. The third was to be Dr Martyn Clark. He was to meet Ahmad again. Dr Clark, the Christian missionary, and Muhammad Hussain, the Muslim divine, were to be strange allies.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Good News for Truth Seekers

The passions stirred up by the revelation that Jesus did not die on the Cross troubled Ahmad sorely. He had come in the spirit and humility of Jesus as the Reformer of the Age. His mission was the spiritual regeneration of mankind. His message was peace. He had no desire to attack any other religion, but that did not mean that religious debate should be stifled. There had to be debate, but that did not sanction scurrilous attack on the saints and martyrs of other religions.

Ahmad therefore made a public proposal that there should be certain limits in which discussion and debate could be carried on. These limits were:

The advocates of a religion should not denounce other religions on the basis of alleged faults.

Secondly, controversy should be confined to the publicly recognised and accepted scriptures of each religion.

Some 5,000 people signed a memorial urging that religious debate should be carried out in this manner, but other religious leaders did not take up his plea.

Ahmad's desire for reasoned religious debate as opposed to invective was occasioned by the increasing attacks on the character and life of Muhammad by Christians and Hindus. Some of the most virulent attacks were by newly-converted Christians who sought to advance their point of view by defaming the beliefs of others. After one such attack by a Christian missionary Ahmad issued an 80 page denunciation.

"We must make it clear that we cherish the best of beliefs with regard to Jesus and we are convinced at heart that he was a true and beloved prophet of God...Of the hundreds of those who served the law of Moses he was also one. So we respect him in every way just as he deserves."

But Christians, said Ahmad, have presented to us a Jesus who says he is God and that all men, apart from himself, are accursed. They were guilty of many misdeeds and so deservd God's curse.

"Such an impertinent and foul-mouthed Jesus" did not exist in the Quran, said Ahmad. So when he criticised Jesus it was the "imaginary Jesus of the Christians...not the humble servant of God, Isa, the son of Mary" that we Muslims know from the Quran.

Ahmad followed up his suggestion that religious leaders should modify their language by proposing a conference in which proponents of all religions could take part. In that way people might be able to make an informed judgement. The conference would last 30 days and the antiquity of the religion would determine the order of speaking, i.e. the first day would be devoted to the speaker who claimed that his religion was the most ancient. He would be followed by speaker on behalf of the second oldest religion and so on.

The purpose of the conference, said Ahmad, was to discuss:

The reasons for belief in God, with special reference to the reasons derived from the sacred writings of the speaker's religion, and the necessity of religion in general, with belief in the speaker's faith in particular, in order to achieve salvation.

In line with his previous declaration for moderation Ahmad stipulated: "Every speaker is requested not to make any reference or allusion to any other religion in his speech, but to give an exposition of only the beauties of his own and the excellence of its principles.

"Speakers will have full liberty to bring forward arguments in support of their claims, but giving offence to another religion or making remarks derogatory to other religions must be avoided most strictly."

But Ahmad wanted more than mere memory of translations of each religion's sacred writings. "The arguments of each speaker must be based exclusively upon the words of his sacred book. He must quote it in the original with full particulars. For instance, a Muslim speaker shall recite the verses of the Quran and not rely upon a translation. Similarly a Christian or Arya Hindu theologian will have to quote from the Bible and the Vedas from the original with their translations and references."

He added, "Only those who can read and translate their religious texts easily from the original should consider coming to this conference. Those who have only a second-hand knowledge through translation cannot be deemed reliable in the eyes of a truth-seeker."

He summed up the reasons for the conference with the words, "I request the learned men of each community to respond to my call...to establish truth, purity and peace in the world. In my opinion this can only be done only by following the precepts of one true religion. I hope the conference will be conducive to manifold blessings. It will afford a safe and peaceful platform to various religions, whose advocates may vindicate their faiths by showing their beauties to the world.

"A period of 30 days may seem to some to be rather lengthy...but I think the period cannot be said to be too long. I hope that those noble-hearted people, whose soul is ever aspiring after virtuous study and research, shall spare it with a willing heart. I appeal to their sense of humanity and philanthropy and wish to convince them that religion is the only source of human elevation...I pray that God may inspire

my fellow-men to come forward to assist me in establishing His true glory in the world."

The idea of a conference established under the auspices of Ahmad was more than his opponents could bear and his invitation was turned down. Ahmad was disappointed but not despondent. The way to save mankind by re-establishing the truth of Islam – which was the mission which God had entrusted to him – was, he was convinced, to put the beauties of Islam in front of the greatest number of people. If the idea of a conference under his auspices was not acceptable then let it be held under the auspices of other people.

He broached the idea in confidence to various possible sponsors in Lahore and the idea was taken up by a Hindu ascetic, Swami Shugan Chandra. The Conference of Great Religions was convened for Lahore on 26, 27 and 28 December, 1896. The suggestions put forward by Ahmad were followed through – no attack was to be made on other religions and the conference was to be carried out by reading aloud previously-prepared dissertations on five separate subjects. These were:

The physical, moral and spiritual condition of man

The state of man after death

The object of man's life on earth and the means of attaining it

The effect of actions in this life and the next

The means for attaining spiritual knowledge.

Ahmad decided that he would not attend the conference in order to avoid controversy. Instead he agreed to write various papers which would be read out. He wrote the papers over the course of some little time and then assembled at Qadian those who were to attend. One of those was a lawyer called Kamal-ud-Din. His face grew longer as he listened to the discourse of Ahmad.

When Ahmad was finished he expressed his disappointment. The dissertations, he said, were a flat and unimpressive commentary on the five subjects. Famous theologians from all over India were attending the conference, editors were sending teams of reporters and thousands of people were expected. They would be laughed at, he declared, if this was all they could put forward on behalf of Islam.

His criticism astonished the other followers and distressed Ahmad for he was now forced to reveal that God had already told him that these dissertations would be acclaimed at the conference. And armed with that knowledge he had already written a poster which he wanted Kamal-ud-Din to have pasted up in the streets of Lahore.

It was headed: GREAT NEWS FOR SEEKERS AFTER TRUTH and it read: "The Conference of Great Religions includes in its programme a paper by this humble one, the subject of which is the excellences and miracles of the Holy Quran. This paper does not represent the result of ordinary human effort, but is one of the Signs of God written with His special grace and help. It sets forth the beauties and truths of the Holy Quran and proves, like the noon-day sun, that the Holy Quran is in truth God's own word, a book revealed by the Lord of all creation. Anyone who listens to this paper from beginning to end, paying attention to my treatment of the five themes set down for discussion, will receive, I am sure, a new faith and a new light. He will come upon a commentary on the whole of the Holy Book. The paper is free from human weaknesses, empty boasts and vain assertions.

"I feel moved on this occasion by sympathy for my fellow human beings to issue this notice. I invite one and all to come to witness the beauties of the Holy Quran, to come and see how unjust are our critics who love darkness and hate light.

"God the All-Knowing, has revealed to me that my paper will be revealed to be superior to all other papers at the

conference. Its light, truth, wisdom and knowledge will glow in contrast to the other papers...This is so because Almighty God has decreed that on that day His Holy Book should reveal its resplendent countenance...From that state of vision I passed to the state of reception of revelation and received the revelation "Verily God is with you. Verily God stands where you stand." This was an assurance of Divine help in metaphorical language.

"I inform everyone that they should come...if they do so the increase in their understanding and faith will be beyond their expectation."

Kamal-ud-Din was not persuaded by Ahmad's revelation and when he and his companions had arrived at Lahore he was reluctant to have the poster stuck up.

It will make us look ridiculous, he told his companions. They urged him to do as Ahmad had asked, but he refused until the very last moment. Then, at dead of night on December 26th, only hours before Ahmad's paper was to be read out, he agreed to have it stuck up. But he chose both positions and places where it was least likely to be noticed.

The Companion chosen to read the paper was Abdul Karim. He began at 1.30 p.m. and was due to finish two hours later. But by 3.30 p.m. Ahmad's commentary on the first theme, The Physical, Moral and Spiritual States of Man, was not yet complete. However, the next speaker declared that Ahmad's commentary was so important that he would be glad if Abdul Karim would continue reading. The audience applauded.

The commentary on the first theme was still not finished at 4.30 p.m., when the proceedings for the day were meant to finish and when it was suggested from the audience that the conference continue until the first theme was finished. The directors of the conference agreed. Ahmad's commentary on the first theme was finally finished at 5.30 p.m. As much

of his papers were still unread it was suggested that the conference continue for an extra day to allow it to be completed.

It was estimated that between 7,000 and 8,000 people attended the conference.

The main newspaper of Lahore at that period was the Civil and Military Gazette. Its report of the conference read: ''Particular interest centred in the lecture of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, a master in the apologetics of Islam. An immense gathering of all sects from far and near assembled to hear the lecture, which...was read by one of his able scholars. On the 27th the lecture lasted for about three and a half hours and was listened to with rapt attention, though so far it dealt only with the first question.''

Even warmer praise was received when the lecture was translated and published in English under the title, The Teachings of Islam. Count Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian philosopher wrote, ''I approved very much of 'How to Get Rid of Sin' and 'The Life to Come'. The ideas are very profound and very true''.

Theosophical Notes, a much-respected religious journal of the period, wrote, ''The best and most attractive presentation of the faith of Muhammad which we have come across''. The Indian Review wrote, ''...'' lucid, comprehensive and philosophical''. In North American the Spiritual Journal declared it ''pure Gospel'' while in Great Britain it found its way into the hands of a religious reviewer of a West Country weekly newspaper who declared, ''Clearly it is no ordinary person who thus addresses himself to the West''.

Ahmad was to continue to be involved in religious controversy, but now his enemies were uniting.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Wrath of God

One of the four pillars that must support a claim to be a Messenger of God, declared Ahmad, was the acceptance of prayer. This did not mean that if one or two prayers appeared to be accepted by God then here was clear proof that the person concerned was a Messenger of God. In the same way the failure of one, or even several prayers, did not mean that the person offering the prayer was not God's Messenger. It might be that the person for whom the prayers were offered was under an irrevocable Divine decree and could not be helped by any prayer or supplication, no matter who it came from.

What could be recognised, however, was the acceptance of a large majority of prayers and supplications. To this end Ahmad proposed the establishment of a committee which would call for the names and particulars of people who might be sorely afflicted with illness or misfortune. Prayer could help them, he said. Prayer could lessen their burden. Prayer could even sometimes pull back the dying from the brink of death. There was, however, no question of calling the dead back to life for life and death was divinely ordained.

Ahmad offered to enter into a contest with the divines of other religions, or other divines of Islam, so that his claim to be a Messenger of God and in receipt of divine help could be truly tested.

The committee, said Ahmad, would compile a list of sufferers during an agreed period. On an appointed day

those sufferers would appear before all the divines taking part so that they could be questioned and a decision taken as to whether it was right to seek divine help. When the final list was produced their names would be distributed by lot to the priests and other divines seeking God's intervention on their behalf. Thus a Muslim divine might be praying for a Christian and a Christian praying for a Hindu.

For a period of a year afterwards the participants would, be praying every day on their behalf, seek alleviation of the sufferings of those allotted to them. If a sufferer should die in the period of 12 months then it would be taken that God, by his special design, had removed him in the middle of the trial to prove that the claim of the divine who was praying for him was false.

The result of the prayers by each divine would be judged on the condition of the majority of sufferers on whose behalf he had prayed to God. Ahmad pointed out that a large number of sufferers was needed for otherwise the result might be inconclusive. If only two or three people were being prayed for then the result might be false for it might be that God had already taken a decision as to their end.

He added: "I have suggested the inclusion of people in the list of sufferers who are afflicted with diverse types of calamities so that Divine mercy may be manifested in diverse forms and people of different temperaments might be able to arrive at a true estimation of the result reached from different points of view."

If he were defeated in this trial, said Ahmad, he would declare that he had not been sent by God and that all his claims were false. "But I firmly believe that God will not so determine and will not let me be ruined", he said.

No one, however, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist or other Muslim would take up the challenge. Indeed, after the debate with Athim, missionaries of the Church of England

had been told specifically not to become involved in any kind of public debate with Ahmad or his followers.

Judging the truth of a prophecy or miracle is not easy. How does one lay down the rules and regulations by which success or failure can be judged? Indeed what is a miracle?

Ahmad himself had earlier declared that there were four types of miracles – intellectual, scientific, spiritual blessings and apparent interference with the known laws of nature. The first three are of much greater importance than the last, he said. This evaluation reveals a certain mistrust of the many miracles claimed on behalf of Christ and, later, on behalf of many saints who not only cured the sick but could speak to birds or even, if the whim took them, fly like birds themselves.

One of the earliest intellectual revelations received by Ahmad was, "I shall carry thy message to the ends of the earth." At that time Ahmad was merely a well-read and self-educated Muslim living in a remote village in India.

In 1989, a hundred years on, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is established throughout the world and has millions of followers.

One of Ahmad's other prophecies, interceding with God on behalf of a person on the brink of death, took place in 1907. It concerned Abdul Karim, who was later to become one of his followers. At that time Abdul Karim was 12 years old and had been sent to Qadian from Hyderabad, South India, roughly a thousand miles away, to pursue his religious studies.

At Qadian he was bitten by a mad dog and was rushed immediately to the Pasteur Institute at Kasauli for treatment. He returned to Qadian, but a few days later showed unmistakable signs of hydrophobia or rabies. A telegram was sent to the director of the Pasteur Institute asking for advice as to what should be done.

The telegram that came back said: "Regret nothing can be done for Abdul Karim".

When Ahmad was told of the reply he was deeply moved and, in earnest prayer, beseeched God for the return to health of the young man. Within 24 hours Abdul Karim's condition began to improve. In due course he recovered completely.

In the 19th century recovery, once the signs of hydrophobia had appeared, was so rare that it was normally described as impossible. Today, with immediate hospital care and the use of the latest drugs, people bitten by a rabies-infected dog stand a chance of recovery, say medical authorities. They will go no further than that.

The telegram from the Pasteur Institute is still retained in the archives of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

Ahmad was to make a number of prophecies concerning worldly matters. One was a general prophecy concerning the condition of the world when rivers of blood would flow and terror would spread and so great would be the catastrophe that even birds, animals and trees would be affected. The miserable end of the Tsar of Russia, then one of the most absolute monarchs in the world, was also forecast.

When he announced his prophecies Ahmad asked his detractors not to rush into immediate denials and repudiations. Let time itself show whether I am correct or not, he said.

But, in truth, not all that much attention was paid to his general prophecies outside those who knew or were in opposition to him. He had no special interest in the affairs of Russia and the family of its ruler. Nor had he any special knowledge of Russia.

The carnage of the First World War, the horrendous bombardments on the Western Front between the Allied Armies of France and Britain and those of Germany, when every tree was shattered and wild life was decimated, bear a striking resemblance to the revelations of Ahmad. So does the end of the Tsar of Russia and his family.

Even more specific was his revelation in Persian of the downfall of the Emperor of Persia. "The palace of the Emperor of Persia has been shaken," he declared on January 15, 1906. At that time the emperor appeared to sit securely on the famous Peacock Throne of one of the world's oldest monarchies. But he was dead less than a year later and a revolution swept his son and successor and their dynasty from the Peacock Throne for ever.

Another prophecy concerned the partition of the province of Bengal which had been ordered by Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India. This was resented by many Indians and an intensive political campaign was started by the recently formed Indian National Congress to have the decision rescinded. But, despite the agitation, when a new viceroy, Lord Minto, arrived and was petitioned, he declared that the partition would not be revoked or even modified.

The Secretary of State for India, who was the British Cabinet Minister responsible for all Indian affairs, rejected equally firmly all representations made to him. It seemed as though the partition must be accepted.

In February, 1906, Ahmad received a revelation in Urdu which said, "Regarding the order that was issued concerning Bengal, they will now be comforted". This prophecy was received with scorn and derision by Hindus who had begun to accept the partition as something that would not be altered. There was nothing more they could do about it for the British Government was the absolute ruler of India. As the years went on Ahmad's prophecy was constantly recalled by his detractors, both Hindu and Muslim. However, in December, 1911, his prophecy was fulfilled. On the eve of his Coronation Durbar at Delhi, George V, Emperor of India, announced the cancellation of the partition.

The prophecy concerning the death of Lekh Ram was to be totally specific and to involve Ahmad in considerable

trouble. It came about after the publication of Braheen Ahmadiyya in which Ahmad first announced that he was in receipt of revelations from God and was God's Reformer of the Age. The Braheen Ahmadiyya had set forth in chapter and verse the excellences of Islam as compared to any other religion. Ahmad had challenged Hindus, Christians and others to compare their sacred writings against those of the Quran.

A number of people had replied to Ahmad's challenge, but apart from Pandit Lekh Ram, a member of the Arya Samaj Hindu sect, they faded away. He became an ardent member of the Arya Samaj and spent the rest of his life propagating its beliefs. He established the sect at Peshawar and came to Lahore in 1884. He was appointed editor of the Arya Gazette which was published in Ferozpore.

Lekh Ram wrote a reply to the Braheen Ahmadiyya which he entitled Refutation of the Braheen-i-Ahmadiyya. A Christian newspaper, *Noor Afshan,* not at all normally friendly to Ahmad or other Muslims, reviewed it as follows, "The author has certainly excelled even the worst of fanatics in abuse, trash, lies and fabrication. He has written such absurd and nonsensical things that no educated and civilised person would ever utter them, far less put them in black and white".

Lekh Ram had spent 25 days at Qadian at Ahmad's invitation, but that personal meeting had not improved their relationship and over the years Lekh Ram had continued to pour scorn upon Islam. He said many harsh and unpleasant things. In particular, he vilified Muhammad not only as a prophet but the conduct of his life in a way which could only arouse deep anger in a Muslim. It was the opposite of the way Ahmad had declared that he wished to conduct religious debate.

On one occasion Ahmad was waiting for a train at Ludhianna railway junction when the time for prayer arrived. Ahmad began his devotions and shortly afterwards Lekh Ram arrived. He tried to catch Ahmad's eye, going from one side to the other. Ahmad acted as though he had not seen him. When a follower drew Ahmad's attention to Lekh Ram's presence, Ahmad said, "He abuses my master The Holy Prophet and wishes to salute me. I do not even wish to see his face".

In March, 1886, Ahmad declared that he had received a revelation about the future as it concerned some of his friends and some of his opponents. Some of these revelations were unpleasant and their disclosure might cause pain, he said. As a result those who wished him to remain silent should tell him.

One of those whose future had been revealed to him was Lekh Ram. He immediately declared that Ahmad should reveal his prophecy.

Ahmad did so. "Six years from today, February 20, 1893, this man will be overtaken by severe torment as a punishment for the disrespect which he has manifested towards the Holy Prophet. By announcing this prophecy I inform all Muslim, Christians and followers of other religions that if this person is not overtaken within the period of six years from today by a torment that is distinguishable from ordinary suffering that should bear an extraordinary character and should be in the nature of Divine chastisement, then you can truly say that I have not been sent by God Almighty, nor do I speak under His spirit."

There was some criticism that the revelation was mere conjecture and that anything could happen in the space of six years. Ahmad therefore amplified his revelation. "If nothing more happened than a fever or an ordinary ache...that would not be a fulfilment of the prophecy...no

one is free from such disorders...if the prophecy is fulfilled in a manner in which the operation of Divine wrath is clearly perceived then you must understand that it is from God.

"I do not bear any personal animosity to Lekh Ram or any other person...but this man has proved himself the enemy of truth and has spoken contemptuously of the perfect and holy being who is the fountainhead of all truth."

In April, 1893, he added to his revelation, "This morning I saw that I was sitting in a large room where some of my friends were present when a well-built man of terrible appearance came and stood before me...As I looked at him he asked, 'Where is Lekh Ram?'...Then I understood that this one had been appointed for the chastisement of Lekh Ram."

He added, "Beware O' foolish and misled enemy. Fear the cutting sword of Muhammad".

Lekh Ram laughed at the revelation. He would make one himself, he declared. Ahmad would die of cholera within three years.

The years passed. Ahmad outlived Lekh Ram's revelation. But Lekh Ram did not outlive Ahmad's.

In the early evening, some time between 6 and 7 o'clock, on Saturday, March 6, 1897, in the securely-locked and guarded house of Lekh Ram a well-built man thrust a dagger into Lekh Ram's belly and rotated it, severing his entrails a number of times. The wife and mother of Lekh Ram, who were in an adjoining room, rushed in when they heard his cries. The mother was knocked to the floor as the murderer ran from the house.

Lekh Ram's death caused a great uproar. It was alleged that the murder must have been committed at Ahmad's behest because he had prophesied it so clearly. Ahmad dismissed the accusation, saying that no religious leader could command respect if he had to urge any follower to carry out such an assassination.

The death of Lekh Ram was merely as God had ordained and had revealed to him. It was the hand of God that had carried out his death – the murderer was a hidden instrument of God, but whether he was a man or an avenging angel he could not say.

"If I had been there I would have tried to save him because that would be my human duty," he added.

The murderer was never found and many years later a lawyer who was a member of the Arya Samaj, wrote that it was a coincidence that the prophecy of Ahmad was fulfilled with the death of Lekh Ram. "God alone knows whether this was a torment inflicted by [God] or was the result of human intervention," he said.

The death of Lekh Ram meant that Ahmad had to be even better protected by his followers. A Hindu secret society was formed and a reward was offered for the person who succeeded in murdering him. Some rumours put the amount that was to be given to the murderer as high as 30,000 rupees, a truly immense sum.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A Charge of Murder

Abdullah Athim died on July 27th, 1896. This was 3 years and 2 months after the terrible prophecy made by Ahmad at the conclusion of their debate. He had declared that God had revealed to him that within the space of 15 months, each month corresponding to one of the 15 days of the debate, Athim would be thrown into Hell unless he changed his attitude to Islam. God would do this because Athim knew that he was deliberately following a falsehood.

When the 15 months had passed and Athim was still alive, Ahmad's opponents laughed and said it was false prophecy. Ahmad thereupon asked Athim to swear on oath that he had not changed his attitude to Islam. He pointed out that at the debate Athim had apologised and repeated constantly, "I repent, I repent. I did not mean to be disrespectful".

But Athim refused to take the oath, withdrew from public life and thereafter uttered not a word against Muhammad. It was alleged that he lived in absolute terror for the rest of his life, was almost permanently drunk and was moved by the missionaries from town to town.

Dr Clark, the Christian medical missionary who had proposed the debate, believing that it would be a means to bring many Muslims into the fold of Christianity, was particularly incensed at the result.

Equally angry were the Hindus of the Arya Samaj sect of Lekh Ram and Ahmad's own Muslim opponents. They therefore, hatched a conspiracy to bring down Ahmad in a

way that would silence him forever. It must be considered that Dr Martyn Clark was the instigator of the plot. He was certainly the main character.

The Ahmadiyya Community sees a certain resemblance between the trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, who was troubled by the obvious conspiracy of the scribes and pharisee against Jesus and the trial of Ahmad before a magistrate, Captain William Douglas, who became equally convinced that there was a conspiracy by all of Ahmad's religious enemies, Christian, Hindu and Muslim.

On August 1st, 1897, Dr Martyn Clark filed a complaint in the Court of the District Magistrate at Amritsar that Ahmad had conspired to murder him. He produced a youth called Abdul Hamid who swore on oath that Ahmad had told him to go to Amritsar and murder Dr Clark. The magistrate immediately issued a warrant for Ahmad's arrest.

The news of the warrant spread fast. His enemies were delighted and each day a crowd gathered at Amritsar railway station hoping to see Ahmad being led from the train in handcuffs. They were disappointed, however. The warrant had been transferred to the court at Gurdaspur. Proceedings opened there only seven days later, on August 8th. That everything had started to move so quickly was due to Dr Clark.

He had called upon Captain Douglas, the young Gurdaspur District Magistrate, shortly after he knew the warrant for Ahmad's arrest had been transferred to Gurdaspur. He asked Captain Douglas to start Ahmad's trial without delay.

Many years later, Captain Douglas, by then senior in rank and retired, told what then happened. "I told him, 'This is very serious. It should go to the police for enquiry. Then it should go to the sessions.'' This was a much higher court.

Dr Clark replied, "I am ill and I want to take leave. I'm afraid my witness may be tampered with. I want the case to go on at once."

Douglas said that was impossible. "I can't possibly charge Ghulam Ahmad with any offence until there has been an investigation. There is not enough evidence."

After a few moments' thought he added, "But I see no objection to asking for security to maintian the peace – if the evidence you have justified that course of action."

After some further discussion Dr Clark agreed. A summons was issued ordering Ahmad to appear in court in Batala on August 10th. Dr Clark was the main witness, but supporting him was a collection of Ahmad's opponents, including Muhammad Hussain. Officially the Hindus were not represented but, very strangely, Pandit Ram Bhaj Dutt, a well-known lawyer of Lahore, volunteered his services as legal adviser. He assisted the prospecution and it can thus be stated that the Arya Samaj sect was represented in a most peculiar and powerful way.

Thus the case was conducted by three of Ahmad's most bitter opponents – Dr Clark, representing Christian missionaries, Muhammad Hussain, representing the Muslim divines, and Mr Dutt, on behalf of Arya Samaj Hindus.

Dr Clark admitted as much in court when he was asked if he had paid any fee to Pundit Ram Bhaj Dutt. He replied, "We, all the people, are taking a concerted action against a man who is our common foe."

This statement, and the fact that Dr Clark could assemble so many witnesses from different parts of the country so quickly, does not tally with the statement he made in court that it was not until July 31st that he had thought of complaining about Ahmad's alleged attempt to have him murdered.

The prosecution case took three days to outline. The would-be assassin, Abdul Hamid was a tall gangling youth. He struck witnesses as both shiftless and lazy, a scrounger ready to pick up food, lodging and clothing wherever he

could find them – so long as he did not need to work. He was certainly not a fanatical Christian, said an American missionary Dr Grey. As far as his protestations about Christianity went he regarded him as an imposter. At different times he had also proclaimed that he was a Muslim and a Hindu.

It was to the American Mission that Abdul Hamid had gone immediately he arrived in Amritsar. The American mission did provide the food and lodging that Abdul Hamid hoped for and he therefore went on to the mission run by Dr Clark and his helpers.

Abdul Hamid had just come from Qadian where he had stayed for 14 days in the Ahmadiyya guest house.

Had he been sent there by Dr Clark and his fellow missionaries with the intention of destroying Ahmad? Did Abdul Hamid stray from the pre-arranged plan of going straight to Dr Clark's mission with the fake intention of assassinating Dr Clark – as he claimed Ahmad had ordered him.

Or was it that when Abdul Hamid arrived at Dr Clark's he let fall where he had been for the previous 14 days – and Dr Clark seized what he thought was a golden opportunity to destroy Ahmad?

Captain Douglas was young. Perhaps that was the reason why Dr Clark was so eager to have the case tried before him. Even so his decision to accept the offer of help from the Hindu lawyer was peculiar. Equally peculiar was his decision to commit Abdul Hamid to the care of Dr Clark while the trial was in progress.

Abdul Hamid had said that his life was in danger. Dr Clark had offered to look after him and Captain Douglas, suspecting nothing had, rather naively, agreed. Captain Douglas was a keen reader of Macbeth and other Shakespeare plays and should perhaps have realised that many a murky thought lies beneath a smiling countenance. But the British in India normally trusted each other without reservation.

By the third day of the trial he had realised that there was something very much amiss with the evidence that was being placed before him. Waiting on a railway platform, he confided his fears to his court clerk. The clerk, perhaps better aware of what rumours were flying around, suggested that Abdul Hamid be taken out of Dr Clark's custody and questioned separately.

Many years later Captain Douglas described his feelings at that time. "I thought his story highly improbably. There were inconsistencies between the version given in Amritsar compared with that recorded by me. Nor was I satisfied with his demeanour while giving evidence.

"I noticed, moreover, that the longer he remained under the care of the mission at Batala, the more profuse and detailed his evidence became. There was much in his first statement to me which had not been revealed when he was examined by the District Magistrate at Amritsar. And when he was examined again by me a day later a mass of additional detail was added."

The inferences, said Captain Douglas, were that Abdul Hamid was being coached each night about what to say in court – or that he knew much more than he had revealed.

Captain Douglas ordered the police to remove Abdul Hamid from Dr Clark's custody and question him independently. It was undertaken by Police Superintendent Le Marchand and an inspector of police. Abdul Hamid stuck resolutely to his story – Ahmad had asked him to murder Dr Clark and he had agreed to do so.

Finally, the police inspector declared, "It's no use. The boy adheres to his statement. He had better be sent back."

Mr Le Marchand agreed. He decided, however, that there should be a record of their investigation. He started questioning Abdul Hamid again, writing down his answers. He had completed two sheets of questions and answers – all in agreement with the evidence previously given – when

Abdul Hamid burst into tears and flung himself at Mr Le Marchand's feet.

He had lied completely in all his statements, he said. Everything was untrue. There was no plot by Ahmad and his followers to murder Dr Clark. The story had been made up by the missionaries. They had coached him over several days as to how he was to tell it. In one instance they had changed several words from his first statement to make the evidence much more damning.

When Abdul Hamid got it by heart one of them said, "Thank you. Our object is accomplished."

In court one of the defence lawyers asked Abdul Hamid, "You are not a bird. How did you intend to escape after you killed Dr Clark?"

The missionaries coaching Abdul Hamid took note and primed Abdul Hamid with an answer in case the question arose again – he was to say that a certain man would have helped him to escape. So that Abdul Hamid would not forget it one of them wrote it on the palm of Abdul Hamid's hand.

As though to illustrate the complete corruption in the way the charge and the evidence was being manufactured by the prosecution, Abdul Hamid added, "he wrote it with a pencil – the one being used by Dr Clark's counsel".

Recalling the trial Captain Douglas said that his suspicions were first aroused because of the way Abdul Hamid gave his evidence – he spoke quickly and with a lot of detail. When Abdul Hamid admitted that he had first gone to the American Mission though he had come expressly to Amritsar in order to assassinate Dr Clark, Captain Douglas decided that enough was enough.

"That answer decided it in my mind that he had no intention of killing Dr Clark. I at once discharged Ahmad and ended the case." He added that if Ahmad wished to sue Dr Clark for malicious prosecution then the court would grant him leave to do so.

Ahmad replied that he would not do so. Dr Clark would have to answer eventually to a higher tribunal. There were some moments of humour and honour during the trial. A crowd gathered round the courthouse each day listening to a running commentary from those lucky enough to have gained admittance to the courtroom. They were bi-partisan. The Muslims, even those who did not believe in him, scented a conspiracy.

Ahmad's arch opponent, Muhammad Hussain, one of the five prosecution witnesses, had at first taken a seat on the verandah of the court. He was asked to leave by a court orderly and did so with ill-grace. Thereupon one of the spectators offered him his chudder, that invaluable length of cloth used in India as a shawl to wrap round the shoulders when there is a draught or at night when it is cold or during the day to protect the head from the sun or to sit on.

He could spread it on the ground to sit on while he waited, said the spectator.

The man who made the offer thought that Muhammad Hussain had come to give evidence on behalf of Ahmad. When he learned that Muhammad Hussain was a prosecution witness he was most upset. He forced him to rise and give him back his shawl.

In court, when Muhammad Hussain gave evidence, he grumbled when he saw Ahmad sitting in a chair and he was not offered one. As a chieftain of the Punjab, Ahmad was naturally entitled to one apart from the fact that he could not be expected to stand for days on end in the court. Muhammad Hussain declared that he was a ''Kursi Nashin'' as his father had been. It was an honorary rank which entitled the holder to a seat whenever he was involved in government business.

Captain Douglas would have none of it. He spoke very sharply, ''Be quiet. And stand up straight when you're giving evidence in court.''

The acquittal did not come as a surprise to Ahmad or his followers. Sher Ali, one of his original 313 Companions was with him in Qadian in July that year, before Dr Clark laid his complaint. Sher Ali, a university graduate, was often to recall that month in later years. Normally when Ahmad received a revelation he waited until prayers before telling his disciples. But one July morning Ahmad summoned his followers to his house. He read to them from a notebook in which he had recorded what he had seen and been told during the night.

Ahmad said that he had seen lightning coming to his house from the West. As it got nearer to it it changed into a star. Then he received the Word of God. "This is a threat from the authorities, but you will be discharged." Ahmad thus knew that a legal action would shortly be brought against him, but that it would not succeed, said Sher Ali. Ahmad had also told them details of the allegations which would be made against him, he added.

Ahmad's conduct throughout the trial won admiration from people who were not his followers. His lawyer wanted to weaken the prosecution case by damaging the character of their witnesses. He therefore asked Ahmad's permission to question Muhammad Hussain about his parentage. Admad forbade it totally. "God forbids unseemly speech," he said.

His lawyer, who was not an Ahmadi, often recalled this in later years. "Here I was defending him on a charge of conspiracy to murder and he forbids it because it might bring shame on a witness who hated him."

The trial, which was meant to destroy Ahmad, had the opposite effect. It was Ahmad who had been shown to be telling the truth. And if he were telling the truth in this instance might it not be that he was also telling the truth about his revelations from God? The number of people coming to Qadian to listen to his preaching increased.

The trial also did no harm to the career of Captain Douglas. He ended his career as a colonel, Chief Commissioner of one of the states of India and holding the decorations of Commander of the Star of India and Commander of the Indian Empire.

He never had any doubts that his verdict was correct and that justice had been done. In his retirement he said, "As soon as Ahmad entered the witness box and I looked at his face I began to think there was something wrong with the accusations. I was certain that a man with such a good face could not have committed the deeds that he was accused of. He was a smiling, open countenance".

The enmity of Muhammad Hussain continued though his influence was now waning. It reached its nadir when he had to gain his livelihood by taking a poorly paid teaching job while his sons attended the school established by the Ahmadiyya Community at Qadian.

Abdul Hamid had been but a pawn in the conspiracy but he was to be pursued by the authorities for perjury and conspiracy. He could not be found at first, but he was later arrested and sentenced to nine months rigorous imprisonment with 44 days in solitary confinement.

Dr Clark, though he was regarded by Captain Douglas and others as the principal conspirator, escaped punishment. It could have been because it would have been difficult to prove – he could have pleaded that he was also a victim and that he had merely passed on the information that he was given. Or it could have been that it was deemed unwise to prosecute a Christian missionary.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Bishop Retreats

Christian missionaries were once again told not to get involved in debates with Ahmad. He was too knowledgeable about all faiths for the missionary who had a European presumption that Christianity must be correct.

An example of this total belief in the superiority of Christianity was to occur some years later when the Rt. Rev. G. A. Lefroy, Bishop of Lahore, gave a public lecture. His subject was "The Innocent Prophet" and he was to declare that Jesus was the only innocent prophet. When his lecture was finished he asked if any of the Muslims present had anything to say.

One had. He drew the Bishop's attention to the saying of Jesus, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God". (Math 19:17)

Ahmad, when he heard of the Bishop's comments, decided to reply. The conception of sin in different religions was so different, he pointed out, that discussion was not of much value. Drinking alcohol was a sin in one religion and a religious act in another. In some religions it was adulterous to look upon a woman with lust. In other religions the sexual act *Neog* was looked upon as a social and religious necessity. To kill a bug or worm was a sin according to some while others regarded cows and sheep as no better than vegetables.

Jesus was put forward as sinless by Christians, said Ahmad, with claims to divinity. But according to Islam there were

no greater sins than the worship of idols or claiming oneself to be God. Moreover sinlessness was a negative virtue. To eschew evil was not a very great accomplishment. It is the doing of good which is creditable, he declared. A subject much more worthy of discussion, he suggested, was "The Ideal Prophet".

Some months later a public letter, signed by a large number of Muslims from all over the Punjab, was sent to the Bishop of Lahore. It was also sent to every newspaper. The letter, in English, was couched most elegantly and eloquently, with a touch of Eastern grace.

"As our transient worldly life is passing away like a summer cloud and the time draws near when it shall pass away into eternity...it is our deepest concern that the pilgrimage of life should come to a close in true righteousness and heavenly bliss, that we may breathe our last as professors of a faith which shows the path to Divine Will. If we are not on the right path then we are ready, heart and soul, to accept the truth, provided it is elucidated to us with clear and cogent arguments.

"If anyone can pluck up courage to come forward and prove to us the truth of the Christian religion, he shall lay us under the greatest obligation. It is our hearts' inmost desire and we are always anxious that an enquiry be made into the comparative merits and excellences of Christianity and Islam."

They had heard of the Bishop's lectures, the letter continued, "and we are of the opinion that among Christians in this country you are unrivalled in religious learning. It has occurred to us that no one can better represent the Christian faith than yourself on account of your vast and practical knowledge, your acquaintance with the Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages and your amiable and polished manners."

They therefore proposed a debate between the Bishop of Lahore and Ahmad on five subjects.

But the Bishop of Lahore was not to be caught with compliments and blandishments.

"I decline to meet Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in any such friendly relationship as the discussion which you propose would involve," he replied. By calling himself The Promised Messiah Ahmad had assumed a name which Christians revered and which was therefore "a most grievous insult and dishonour to Him Whom I worship as my Lord and Master. How then can I possibly consent to meet him in a friendly way?"

His letter was as long and carefully worded as the invitation. He said that he did not believe that the superiority of one religion over another could be settled by intellectual argument. He was glad to study writings which would give him a clearer understanding of the doctrines of Islam, but that was quite different from joining in a public debate where the desired result was the acceptance of the faith whose claims had apparently been best demonstrated by one of the speakers.

He concluded that he also could not afford the time for a public debate. As a Bishop his time was greatly occupied by administrative duties.

The Bishop had not been quite true to himself in his reply as it was he who had initiated the public debate by calling upon Muslims at his public lectures to discuss his remarks. And he had issued those invitations on ground that he had chosen, as the Muslims pointed out when they replied to his refusal.

"Your initiative in calling upon the Muslims to prove the innocence and life of their own Prophet against those of Jesus Christ – a sort of controversy in which one side was quite unprepared and unrepresented – was a further inducement to Muslims to offer Your Lordship a field of discussion which the merits of both the religions and their founders could be more properly and fairly tested.

"To do justice to your position and your talents, an adversary was proposed who occupied no mean position...With two such great and remarkable personages as the champions of the two great religious systems of the world, the public should not be left in the dark as regards the solution of a question which has occupied the greatest minds of every age."

Busy as His Lordship was could he not set aside five days which was the suggested duration of the debate?

It was not such an ingenuous question as it appeared. It put the Bishop on the spot. Pleading administrative duties did not sound very convincing.

The Muslim signatories added that when they had told Ahmad of the Bishop's statement that he could not meet him in friendship, Ahmad had replied, "I do not look upon anyone in the world as my enemy? I hate not individuals but the false beliefs they entertain. As regards individuals, my feelings towards them are of the utmost sympathy and good wishes. How can I then regard anyone as my enemy who enjoys respectability among his co-religionists and, moreover, is honoured for his position and learning? I love him though I do not like his doctrines....

"Nobody can do any good to a person who he regards as his enemy, but I say truly that if ever an opportunity offers itself when I find it in my power to do both good and evil to his Lordship, I will do him such good that will surprise the world. The power to call people to the path of righteousness and a zealous desire for their transformation grow in true love. Enmity obscures wisdom and extinguishes sympathy."

The exchange of letters, which had been published in newspapers and journals throughout India, had aroused interest even among those who were not interested in religion and the Bishop's refusal fanned the controversy.

The Indian *Spectator* wrote, "The Bishop of Lahore seems to have retired with more haste than dignity from a challenge which he had himself provoked. His Lordship some time back set before himself the task of proving to Muslim audiences that Christ was the true Messiah and the challenge was taken up....

"His Lordship speaks of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as 'offering a grievous insult and dishonour to Christ venturing to call himself the Messiah'. The Jews of 2,000 years ago crucified Christ for the self-same reason. They felt insulted by his venturing to call himself the Messiah.

"What is even more strange is the Bishop's pointing to the fact of Mirza Ahmad's claims 'being treated with ridicule and contempt by an overwhelming majority of Punjab Muslims', as conclusive proof of the falsity of those claims.

"When Pilate asked assembled Jews as to whom they would like to be liberated on the day of the Passover – Christ or Barabbas? – they unanimously voted for the impenitent thief. Did that prove that Christ's claim to Messiahship were unfounded?

"We are not among the followers of Mirza Ahmad and have no intention of upholding his claims in preference to those of Christ, but we object to the logic of the hustings being introduced into discussion on religion. If all Muslims would have acclaimed the Mirza, would the Right Reverend prelate of Lahore have altered his opinion of his mission?

"Religious beliefs in this country are in a state of dissolution just now. It behoves those who are anxious to see them crystalise around the truth not to employ arguments which are not of the purest temper."

No more damning indictment of the Bishop of Lahore's attitude would seem to be possible.

The five subjects suggested for the debate were:

> Which of the two prophets, Jesus and Muhammad, can be shown from their own scriptures or other arguments, to be perfectly innocent.

Which prophet, on the same authority, can be deservedly called "The Living Prophet" and possess Divine Power?
Which prophet, on the same authority, is entitled to be considered the intercessor with God?
Which of the two religions can be called the Living Faith?
Which of the two teachings inculcated by the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible, Unity or Trinity, is more excellent and natural?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Revelations Regarding Sikhism

Ahmad's study of other religions had convinced him that bitter denunciation of other religions added nothing to the sum total of religious knowledge – and equally little to the well-being of mankind. Adjectival abuse was even worse. Prophets had come in many guises and in many lands to many people, but their sole object was the salvation of mankind. Therefore respect was due to them all, he said.

But this respect did not imply any lessening in the final truth of Islam and the message of redemption preached by Muhammad. Islam encompassed them all.

This respect for other faiths and the peaceful propagation of religion was perhaps best exemplified by Ahmad's constant declaration that the holy war of the Quran was not a military war which would convince people, on pain of death, that Islam was the one and only way to salvation.

That belief, said Ahmad, was totally contrary to the word of God in the Quran. Nowhere in the Quran had God suggested that conversion to Islam should be obtained by anything further than peaceful persuasion. All nations would, in the end, accept the truths of Islam. But it would be because they wanted to, not because they were forced to. Talk of a holy war was not only false, it was also dangerous, said Ahmad. To talk of a holy war which would sweep the British out of India was to foment trouble without reason.

Did Muslims not realise how lucky they were to live under British rule, he asked frequently. If the British left, it did not mean they would necessarily live under a Muslim government. It might be Sikh or Hindu. There were many people around who could remember the atrocities suffered when the Sikhs took over the Punjab. That had ended when the British arrived. Now everyone could practise their religion without fear. And their laws made it an offence to insult other religions. Insults could stir up riots and that was an offence.

Ahmad's praise for the benefits of British rule resulted in accusations that he was paid by the British government. These accusations have come principally in the 20th century. It is a cardinal failing for historians and biographers to judge 19th century conditions by 20th century standards. At that time there was no mass demand for home rule. Certainly the feeling existed, but only as a future possibility. At the moment, for the great majority, obtaining enough to eat was what mattered. And as British colonial rule usually had the ability to leave existing government structures in place it did not seem to most Indians that they lived under an alien government. Ruling them were their own princes, rajahs and maharajahs.

Islam was not a political movement, declared Ahmad. If a government was good and allowed Muslims to practise their religion then they should give it their support. If a government had faults then these should be corrected – but not to favour Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or other religions.

As he had defended Islam when the Arya Samaj sect attacked the character of Muhammad, Ahmad also defended the character of Baba Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, when he was attacked by the leader of Arya Samaj sect. Baba Nanak was an ignorant person, said the Arya Samaj leader in a newly-published book. He did not know Sanskrit, he posed as a learned man out of conceit and it was only

after his death that self-seeking followers set out to convince people that he was a saint.

Ahmad had studied the Grantha Sahib, the Sikh sacred writings, as he had studied the Vedas of the Hindus and the Bible of the Christians and he rose to the defence of Baba Nanak who was, he said, a holy man and one of God's saints.

Baba Nanak was born near Lahore in 1469 into a Hindu family, but early on in life he became convinced of the unity of God and very much against the polytheism of Hinduism or the association of any person or thing in partnership with God. His thinking was therefore in accordance with the tenets of Islam and against the many gods of Hinduism and the belief in the Trinity of God of the Christians.

Baba Nanak travelled widely – he is believed to have visited Mecca and Medina, the birthplace of Muhammad. He died in 1539.

Ahmad refuted the allegations made against Baba Nanak in a book called Sat Bachan. There were contradictions in the Grantha Sahib and Ahmad set out to separate historical fact from the accretions of legend which now encrusted the sacred writings. The words of Baba Nanak were correct, he said. It was later writers who had interpolated their own ideas.

This is certainly the opinion of the scholar who wrote about Sikhism in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and declared that Baba Nanak was a Muslim and the departure of Sikhism from the fold of Islam "was gradual and was as much due to political causes as to a steady departure from the teachings of the founder of Sikhism".

In the second half of his book Ahmad recounted the researches he had made and the discovery of various relics of Baba Nanak which led him to declare that Baba Nanak was indeed a devout Muslim.

The most important was the cloak known as the Chola Sahib or holy cloak. It was in the possession of a Sikh family

in the village of Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur district. This cloak is believed by Sikhs to have been a direct gift of God to Baba Nanak. His first five successors wrapped it round their heads so that they might gain wisdom from it. This ceremony continued until the time of Arjan Das. One of his followers had been in charge of some construction work near Amritsar and Arjan Das was so satisfied that when he offered him a reward he added that he could have anything he wished.

The disciple, greatly daring, said he would like to have the Chola Sahib cloak which the Guru was then wearing round his head. Arjan Das, because he had asked the question and the disciple had replied truthfully, gave him the cloak. In time it passed into the hands of descendants of Baba Nanak.

After a preliminary investigation by four of his followers Ahmad went to Dera Baba Nanak. Ahmad asked that the cloak be unwrapped from its coverings. The guardian hesitated. It was not something he had been asked to do before. But Ahmad was insistent, he wanted to see the writing which was said to be embroidered on the cloak. Finally the guardian of the cloak agreed and fetched the silver key for the lock that allowed the cloak to be unwrapped.

The cloak was wrapped in some three hundred coverings of silk, cotton and fine wool. Some of them bore the name and description of the donor. These were removed slowly, one by one, until, more than an hour later, the cloak was spread in front of them. To Ahmad's delight embroidered on it were the words he had hoped for. These were the credo of Islam: There is no one worthy of worship save God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Several verses of the Quran, including the entire Sura Fatiha were also embroidered on the cloak. A sketch was made of the cloak showing exactly where the verses were placed.

Some time later Ahmad investigated another authenticated relic of Baba Nanak which was kept in the village of Gura Har Sahai in the district of Ferozepore. Again it was wrapped in many coverings of silk and cotton. When these were removed the relic proved to be a small-size edition of the Quran specially prepared for travellers. It was designed to be slung over the shoulder. In Urdu it is known as Hima-il-Sharif.

Ahmad's investigation of these relics were not the only reason he was able to state categorically that Baba Nanak was a Muslim saint. He had seen Guru Baba Nanak in a vision, he said, and had spoken with him. Guru Nanak had told him that he was a Muslim because Islam was the true religion.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Bonds are Forged

Forty people had taken the covenant of allegiance to Ahmad in March, 1889, at Ludhianna. Seven years later, in 1896, the roll call of his followers numbered 313. It meant that he had gained only a further 273 followers in seven years or only some 40 new converts a year.

His second son, Mirza Bashir Ahmad, later wrote that this was a period of great hardship for the community. "At this period, when it was pitted against severe opposition from all sides, its progress was so slow that opponents waited hopefully for an early collapse. This was a period of great apprehension and distress for The Promised Messiah as well. The snail-like progress of the Community was a harrowing experience for his fast-moving soul. But he knew that it is the case with every reformer and that there was no escape from such hard trial, which was necessary for the consolidation and faith of the Community."

The first gathering of his followers had taken place on December 27th, 1891. The number of people who attended was small – between 75 and 80 – but it was so successful that on the last day Ahmad announced that henceforth there would be an annual gathering at Qadian.

Everyone should make a special effort to attend, he said. "Such truths and words of wisdom shall be heard during this meeting as are essential for the increase of faith, conviction and knowledge. Friends will also be entitled to special prayers and special attention. Effort will be made before the most

merciful Lord that He may draw them towards Himself and accept them and grant them great favours.''

There was a further advantage in such an annual gathering, Ahmad added. Every year people would see and meet new converts and this personal acquaintance would develop into friendship and love. ''We will make every effort through prayer to create a bond of spiritual union between all and remove every barrier of estrangement, aloofness and difference.''

At the second conference the number attending had risen to 500, despite the opposition of Muslim divines who declared that such a gathering was a sin. More than 300 of those present came from outside the Punjab. In order to accommodate them a number of buildings were hastily erected which, over the years, were to become both bigger and more permanent.

A number of decisions were made at this conference which, though they seemed more administrative than religious at the time, laid the foundations of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Movement. The Movement decided to finance their first missionary, who was called Sayed Muhammad Ahsan, and to establish a printing press at Qadian. It was to print leaflets, then booklets and finally a newspaper. At a later conference it was also decided that a school should be established at Qadian.

These three decisions were to be the foundation stones on which the success of the Ahmadiyya Movement was to be built. The Education of the children of all members by donations from every member meant a more prosperous community in the future.

The funding of missionaries meant that Islam was once again seeking converts. The decision to establish a printing press meant that Islam had embraced new technology as a means of converting the world.

One result of this decision was that Ahmad agreed that his photograph should be taken so that people whom he would never meet could see what he looked like. Islamic fundamentalists had declared that photography was idolatrous for it involved the making of images. Ahmad dismissed this objection. It was only idolatrous if the intention was that the image should be worshipped.

The photographer had a fixed Victorian notion of what a picture should be like. He kept asking Ahmad to open his eyes more widely, to look intently at the camera, but Ahmad, remembering the Quranic injunction against the "conscious stare" kept his eyelids half-closed. Finally the photographer gave up.

He embraced other new techniques equally enthusiastically. Only a few years after Eddison invented the gramophone Ahmad was experimenting with it as a means of carrying the message of Islam.

Ahmad was determined that nothing associated with him should ever be turned into an object of veneration. Early on a follower had obtained one of his shirts. Ahmad did not ask for it back, but he insisted that when the man died the shirt be buried with him and thus destroyed. There was only one God and to Him alone could prayers be offered.

The innovations agreed at the gathering were financed by the members of the Ahmadiyya Movement. There were no fabulously wealthy men among them. Among them were doctors, local government employees, small landowners, merchants of various kinds, but the majority were ordinary working people. Many were very poor, but each month each member gave a stated sum. It did not matter how little a member could afford, perhaps just a tiny coin each month, but it had to be a regular sum each month. Later on each member gave a percentage of his income.

Financial management had now become essential for until then followers and guests had given what they wanted

for their food and accommodation. It might be sufficient to cover their stay. It might be so little that it did not pay for their food. Ahmad's family income made up the rest. Once, when he was told there was no food for their guests and no money to buy any, he sent a messenger to his wife. The messenger returned with a piece of jewellery which was pawned to buy food.

Suddenly the trickle of people coming to Qadian to listen to him became a flood. By 1900 there were 70, 80 and sometimes even a hundred visitors a day to Qadian. Most stayed for several nights in the guesthouses, which were constantly increased and enlarged.

The number of his adherents rose equally dramatically. Ahmad said that by 1900 they numbered more than 30,000. Two years later 500 people a day were taking the covenant of allegiance! His prophecy made more than 20 years ago that the road to Qadian would be worn into ruts by the people coming to see him had proved correct.

Once Ahmad chanced on a carpenter planing smooth a plank of wood for a new building. That is not necessary, he told him, the essential thing is to get the building up so that people can sleep there. Luxury was not necessary.

In the guesthouses between 50 and 60 women cooked and cleaned for the guests and for the 150 boys who were now enrolled in the school. There were not enough classrooms so many classes were taken outside with the boys sitting on the ground. In the printing shop some 15 men worked.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Humility, Love and Courage

What brought about this transformation? There have been great preachers, great leaders of religion in many lands and in many tongues, but the candle of their oratory has burned bright, grown dimmer as the years passed, flickered into sudden brightness again as the wax of the stub of the candle dissolved completely, then...darkness.

What was different about Ahmad?

The first essential difference was his total, never-wavering conviction that he was The Promised Messiah. He was God's Messenger, he said. No matter who stood against him, no matter how few stood with him, no matter if all deserted him, he would continue with the task that God had given him.

Muslim, Hindu and Christian religious leaders had united in condemning him, but ordinary people flocked to hear him. To understand his success, and the continuing success of the Ahmadiyya Movement, one must consider his character, his actions, the principles by which he conducted his life and by which he told his followers they must conduct their lives if they were to be members of the Ahmadiyya Movement and succeed in uniting all religions under Islam.

The qualities he praised were love, hospitality, tolerance, patience and sympathy. He regarded simplicity and industriousness as major qualities. "To me those persons who lead a life of simplicity are very dear," he said. He condemned pride, hard-heartedness and the love of luxury.

Ahmad did not suddenly become an efficient organiser of men and money. Nor did he convince people with the trappings of worldly success – richer and more exotic food, fine clothing, elegant house furnishings.

It was his character, the words he spoke and the life he led which convinced them that he was truly The Promised Messiah. His followers called him ''Hazrat'' meaning ''Holiness'' as a sign of love and understanding. And he, in turn, addressed them politely as ''My brothers..''.

On only one occasion did he ask for a particular piece of clothing – and that was because he was worried that someone might be offended. He saw one of the maids, looking rather disconcerted, carrying a man's coat. He asked what the trouble was and she replied that she had been asked to give it to one of his followers by the man's uncle. But he had declined it, saying he was not interested in wearing other people's cast-off clothes.

''Give it to me,'' said Ahmad. ''Tell the boy's uncle that he thought I would like it. If he doesn't mind I will keep it and wear it.'' In that way, he added, the boy's uncle would not be offended by the rejection of his gift.

It was not that Ahmad was not interested in clothing – he disregarded it. His mind was on other things. He frequently put the buttons of his waistcoat into the wrong buttonholes. When the buttons fell off – because of the strain put on them – he remarked, to the amusement of his companions, that waistcoat buttons wasted a lot of time.

He was once presented with a pair of Western-style shoes, shaped for left and right feet. Ahmad marked them so that he could know at a glance which was left and which was right. But he often put them on incorrectly. This, for him, was wasting time for something that was of no consequence and he reverted to the slip-on sandals which he had worn all his life.

Ahmad wore a cap under his white turban. On one occasion, having made his ablutions before prayer, he asked the daughter of the friend in whose house he was, to fetch his cap from the room where he had made his ablutions. The daughter went inside, looked around, but could see only an old worn cap which she was certain could not be his.

She returned and said his cap was not there. Ahmad said he was sure he had left it in there. Three times the daughter went in and searched, each time ignoring the old worn cap. Finally Ahmad's son went in and immediately returned with the old cap. She never imagined, the daughter told friends later, that Ahmad would have such an old cap and live such a simple life that things like that were of no importance to him.

Once he complained to his servant Hamid Ali that he had had a pain in his ribs for the last three days whenever he sat down. Something in his clothes must be pinching him, he said. Hamid Ali, surprised, ran his hands over Ahmad's clothes and from a waistcoat pocket drew out a large piece of brick. Perhaps it was this, he suggested ironically, that was hurting Ahmad.

Ahmad smiled. "Ah, yes, I remember," he said. Mahmood his son had put it in his pocket and asked him to carry it for him. He said he might want to play with it one day.

The small room where he slept and worked was still bare and spartan. Some visitors were invited in one day when Ahmad was unwell. Ahmad was sitting on the plain wood-framed charpoy with his papers and books around him. There were no chairs and they had to sit on a green-painted wooden box, an iron chest and the floor. There was not even a mat on the floor, one of them recalled, and the quilt on the bed was torn with its stuffing peeping out.

Sometimes he did not return to his room to sleep. One follower recalls that he stayed up all night on the flat roof of the mosque with Ahmad. After some time Ahmad wrapped a sheet round his body and lay down on the bare tiled roof. "People think they cannot sleep without a bed. By the kindness of God I enjoy good sleep even on the floor," he said. "Saintliness and a love of luxury cannot go together."

It seemed to the follower, however, that Ahmad barely slept more than five minutes at a stretch. Then he would open his eyes, murmur "All praise be to God" and go back to sleep again.

During the debate with Athim, Ahmad and his followers went up to the roof of the house where they were staying and Ahmad sat down on a piece of matting in the shade of a wall. The owner of the house, affronted that his honoured guest had so little comfort, said he would bring him a cotton carpet on which he could rest.

Ahmad refused. "I did not lie down to sleep. Sleep creates obstacles and these are not the days for sleep."

He was equally indifferent to food. In one town, where he was attending a meeting, he worked at his notes until late in the evening. He then realised that he was hungry. He had not eaten anything since breakfast. There was consternation among his followers. They had forgotten to serve him a meal! Everone else had eaten hours ago, there was no food in the house and all the markets were closed.

Ahmad shrugged his shoulders, smiled and said it was not important, he was sure there were some morsels of bread left in the baskets where everybody had been eating. He walked into the dining room, hunted around and emerged triumphant, holding three or four broken pieces of bread. This was quite enough, he said, and went back upstairs to continue working.

This simplicity of manner was to be recalled in many different ways by his followers. Abdul Karim said that one afternoon he was in Ahmad's room. It was the hot season and most people slept in the afternoon because of the oppressive heat. He lay down on Ahmad's charpoy, meaning to rest only for a few minutes, but he fell fast asleep. When he awoke he found Ahmad sitting on the tiled floor at the foot of the bed. Abdul Karim was understandably embarrassed.

Ahmad waved away his apologies. I stood guard because the children outside were making so much noise and you were obviously very tired, he said.

On another occasion, when Ahmad's servant was away, a follower asked if he could stay the night so that he could attend to any of Ahmad's needs. He sat down ready to respond to any request. Instead of serving he found that he was being served. It was Ahmad who fetched the water for ablutions before prayer, Ahmad who fetched two glasses of milk before retiring. When he protested that he wanted to get these things in order to help him and free him for more important work, Ahmad replied that it was not important, he knew where everything was.

At dinner one evening, when his companions and guests were discussing their likes and dislikes regarding pickles, he suddenly got up and left the room. He returned with a bottle of the pickle that one person had said he was particularly fond of.

Why had he not asked a servant to fetch it, a guest asked. He was told that Ahmad did not think he was superior to anyone. He never acted the master who only gave orders. When beds, chairs or trunks had to be moved and Ahmad happened to be passing a servant would often find that Ahmad was on the other end of a bed.

When a plague struck India Ahmad ensured that the government's hygiene recommendations were carried

out – including counselling women to come out of purdah for inspection by doctors. But he also helped brush the yard and poured disinfectant into the drains round the house. In Hindu households dealing with drains and sweeping was most often done by a special caste – the Untouchables.

Ahmad never thought himself too grand for any task. One guest arrived well after midnight when everyone was asleep. Ahmad and a porter answered his knock. Ahmad asked him to be seated, brought him a glass of milk and asked him to make himself comfortable while he and the porter arranged a bed. The guest waited a considerable time and then, attracted by the sound of banging, followed the noise to its source.

He found Ahmad and the porter hurriedly banging together the framework for a charpoy. All the beds were occupied and, not wanting to disturb the people who normally looked after these arrangements, Ahmad had told the porter they would make the bed themselves while the guest waited.

His hospitality became as well known as his humility. When guests arrived he always enquired what kind of food they liked, what they did not like and any preferences regarding their sleeping arrangements. Once some guests arrived and the porters, being busy, told them rather brusquely to unload their own luggage from their cart. The guests took offence, remounted their vehicle and set off again. Ahmad, when he heard what had happened, set off after them on foot. He caught up with them some five miles away. He apologised for the casual reception they had received and accompanied them back to Qadian where he helped unload their luggage himself.

Ahmad did not reprimand the servants directly. This was never his method. Some days later, however, in the mosque he said they must all think more of the welcome they extended to people who came to Qadian. When somebody had travelled many miles and suffered the hardships of the journey it was

a relief to finally arrive. If they were not met with a ready welcome it was a great disappointment. Everyone should therefore strive to see that none of their guests were ever disappointed.

One guest, a well-known religious leader, fell seriously ill and appeared to be on the point of death. At midnight a companion went to Ahmad's house. It was in complete darkness. He went round the corner to where he knew Ahmad's bedroom was and called out. Ahmad answered. When the companion told him how ill the religious leader was Ahmad prayed silently. Then he mixed him a medicine and said, "Make him drink this. God will save him."

The next morning the religious leader was on the road to recovery. "Prayer is the real weapon in the armoury of a believer," Ahmad told the companion. "The medicine was only a palliative."

Ahmad also often ate with the guests to ensure that proper standards of cooking and service were maintained. He would actually eat only a little himself, but instead busy himself bringing food and freshly baked bread to the guests. Then he would nibble at some bread, helping himself to small, fresh pieces in case a guest noticed that he had finished his meal and so be too embarrassed to continue eating.

He was equally polite and welcoming in the morning. Despite the hundreds of people who were now there he was always the first to offer the Islamic greeting "Peace be with you".

When a guest left Ahmad parted from him as though a very dear relative was leaving. He made a point of being there to say goodbye and would ask them to be sure to come again. Some of them made unexpected demands. Ahmad had a small-size Quran of which he was very fond. One guest said he would like to have it as a memento of Ahmad. Ahmad immediately handed it over. When he was asked why he had

done so, he said, "I liked it very much, but I thought of the verse of the Holy Quran which says if you are asked for a favour, do not disregard the request. I therefore gave him the Quran."

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Value of Prayer

Ahmad's generosity and charity were not confined to his followers or other Muslims. There was no doctor in Qadian and peasants therefore came to Ahmad for medicine. They arrived without warning, knocking at his door at different times throughout the day. A friend who watched told him that he had spent three hours that day dispensing medicine. Ahmad would also pay for a doctor to visit people and pay for their medicine.

He set aside a tenth of whatever money he received to be given away in charity. Usually, his wife recalled, he gave away much more than a tenth of their money in charity. It was a good idea, he told his followers, to physically set aside a tenth so that it could not be considered as money that was available. Otherwise, when expenditure was more than expected, it was the charitable tenth that was raided.

On one occasion, during winter, the postman delivering letters remarked how cold it was and that he had no coat. Ahmad immediately went inside and brought back two coats. "Which one would you like?" he asked. The postman said he would like them both. So Ahmad gave him both coats.

He found it hard to reprimand people, even when a reprimand was deserved. When a maid was discovered stealing rice a shouting and crying match developed. Ahmad happened to pass by and when he heard of the reason he said gently, "Well, perhaps she had greater need of it than we

can know. We should not, therefore, judge her too harshly. Adopt forgiveness which is the attribute of God.''

He once asked Nurud Din, the first person to take the covenant, for his comments on a poem he had written. He asked him to hand it to his secretary when he had finished. After a little time the secretary, who knew the printer was waiting, approached Nurud Din and asked for the poem. Nurud Din turned pale, searched his clothing and confessed he had lost it. When Ahmad was told Nurud Din expected a reprimand, but all that Ahmad said was that he was certain that God would provide him with an even better poem without delay.

He made the same reply some years later. His son Mahmood, then aged about four, had discovered a box of matches and came into Ahmad's room with some of his friends. He started striking the matches and finally set fire to several pages of manuscript. The room filled with acrid smoke but the fire burned itself out on the tiled floor. All this time Ahmad continued working. He had not noticed anything.

Then he started to look for the pages and a boy told him what had happened. ''Good,'' he said smilingly. ''Perhaps this was the right thing to happen. God in His grace may guide us to a better subject.''

He was equally unaware when food arrived – or disappeared. It is related that a meal was set beside while he worked. A dog came in, ate the meal and went out again.

People were constantly knocking at his door. One of his children came in 20 times. Outside was the laughter and conversation of the people who worked in the guesthouses. How could he concentrate he was once asked?

''I do not heed what is going on around me so I am not disturbed,'' he said.

Ahmad exhibited gentleness and forgiveness without exception. Hamid Ali, his servant, once placed some valuable

registered letters in his pocket, meaning to post them. They slipped out when he was emptying some rubbish. A child found them and handed them to Ahmad. "You're becoming a bit forgetful, Hamid Ali," said Ahmad gently.

Among the crowds coming to Qadian were naturally many sceptics. One religious scholar said he had been nominated by a particular group to investigate Ahmad's claims. He spoke in a rather ornate and flowery style, using words that seemed designed to impress his listeners rather than convey his meaning. At one stage he launched a personal attack on Ahmad, making derogatory remarks about his Punjabi accent.

An Afghan scholar and nobleman, Sahibzada Abdul Latif, who was in Qadian at that time, became greatly enraged and started talking in Persian which the newcomer did not understand. Ahmad was sitting beside Sahibzada Latif and, hearing the anger in his words, took his hand in his and held it tightly and so forced Sahibzade to listen silently to the denunciation.

Sahibzada Latif said later that the insults were so great that he could not have stopped himself hitting the man, had not Ahmad ensured that he could not move by holding his hand so tightly.

Ahmad remarked, "Prayer should be said even for disbelievers. This purifies the heart, opens it up and gives it courage. Therefore unless the members of this Community adopt this attitude there will be hardly any difference between them and other Muslims. To me this is important...the greatness of God lies in forgiving the wicked along with the righteous."

At another time he emphasised that every wickedness does not deserve to be opposed and that instead forgiveness – as perhaps indicated in the case of the stolen rice – should be adopted. "Be patient. Be tolerant," he said. "Suppress

your emotions. When you enter into discussion or talk about a religious matter, polite words should be used and decent behaviour observed. If someone is rude to you then say goodbye and leave immediately. If bad language is used about you then be careful – do not pay back in the same coin. Stupidity should not be reciprocated by stupidity.''

''So expel from amongst you the person who is a symbol of wickedness, mischief, disruption and evil. That member of our Community who cannot live with poverty, piety, goodness, tolerance, politeness and decent behaviour should depart, because our God does not wish that he should remain among us. Therefore be warned and be good at heart and adopt humility and truthfulness as your way of life.''

Ahmad practised what he preached. On one occasion in Lahore he and a Hindu religious scholar were involved in a discussion when another Hindu came in and began vilifying Ahmad in gutter language. The Hindu scholar, ashamed of his co-religionist, asked him to stop, but Ahmad signalled that he should continue.

Ahmad listened silently with his hand over his mouth. Sometimes he would put the end of his turban in his mouth. Finally his accuser fell silent. Ahmad then said, ''Brother, if you wish to say more then please carry on.''

But the man rose and went away.

The Hindu scholar was greatly impressed with Ahmad's self control and often spoke of it. ''We have heard of Christ's humility. Now I have witnessed the like with my own eyes.''

He added, ''It is impossible for such a person not to succeed.''

When Ahmad was questioned about his refusal to become annoyed when people vilified him, he replied, ''I have such control over myself and God has made me such a Muslim that even if a person keeps abusing me in the filthiest language for a whole year, ultimately it shall be he who will be

ashamed and shall have to admit that he could not dislodge or defeat me.''

He urged this same patience and self control on his followers. ''It is your duty to be patient,'' he told them. ''A branch never exceeds the tree. Consider how long they can abuse you. They will get tired in the end. Their bad language, plots and mischiefs can never tire me. If I were not ordained by God then perhaps I would be afraid of their abuse. But as I am certain I am chosen by God why then should I care for such cheap things?

''Who has been harmed by this abuse? Them or me? Their followers have decreased while mine have increased. If their claims were of any value why is it that my Community has so increased?''

He showed the same self-control when, for almost three days, a Muslim scholar who was staying in one of the guesthouses attacked him personally whenever there was a discussion. One day, when he could not find an answer to a statement by Ahmad, he fell silent. But not for long. ''Now I truly know that you are an anti-Christ because they have the power to make people silent against their will.''

On the day of his departure, which was greeted with relief by members of the Community, he sent a note into Ahmad's house saying that he was a poor man and needed money to pay for his journey back home. Ahmad came out and gave him 15 rupees.

The members of the Community knew nothing about Ahmad's charity until the Muslim scholar himself produced a handbill which related his visit to Qadian and his final request to Ahmad.

Ahmad told his followers that they could not establish the truth of Islam by logic alone. Nor could they emerge victorious, merely by ridiculing others in reply to their taunts. Those who did so would become hard-hearted.

He added, "If you seek salvation then adopt the faith of the humble and, with all humility, put your neck in the yoke of the Holy Quran. Destruction awaits the wicked and Hell is for tyrants. But he who bends his knee shall be saved from destruction. Be like a child in obeying the commandments of God. Let humility and simplicity reside in your hearts and obey without demur."

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Family Life

In the mosque Ahmad was always inconspicuous. He usually stood at the far right in the front row and not in the middle as most visitors expected – Abdul Karim usually stood there and it was to him that most visitors introduced themselves. Once there had often been six or seven people at prayers, now there were often a thousand. When the mosque was full Ahmad would stand at the back near to where people had taken off their shoes. For a little while, however, he said his prayers in an annexe of the mosque. This was because a feeble-minded person had taken to standing beside him. In the annexe his antics could not distract the rest of the congregation.

Though important dignitaries were not infrequent visitors to Qadian – a representative of the Sultan of Turkey was one of them – ordinary people never felt ill at ease with Ahmad. He always had time to listen to them, though sometimes his companions grew impatient when a small farmer would ramble on and on with tales of his crops and other mundane matters. But to these very ordinary people Ahmad listened with such interest and love that they considered him as their dearest friend.

On one occasion Ahmad noticed that an old man who had been sitting near him had to move further and further away from him as more and more important people arrived. Finally he was practically outside the door. When the evening meal arrived Ahmad stood up and took his plate and went over

to the old man and sat down beside him. "Let us eat together," he said.

Children were equally at ease with Ahmad. They climbed on his lap and told him their nursery tales of frogs, crows and animals. He told them stories, too, it is remembered. They treated him as a companion. One of his wife's friends often stayed with them for a month. Her little daughter occasionally amused herself by coming into his room and fanning him as he worked. One day she found it more interesting to sit by the window. She told him, "Come and sit over here. It's easier for me."

Ahmad duly got up and sat where she had directed.

When the boys of the school were going off to sit the matriculation examination, they sought his blessing before they left. He was about to return to his house when his coat was suddenly tugged violently from behind. "Please, Sir, I've been left out," said a small boy.

Ahmad turned, smiled and shook hands with the boy. "May all of you pass," he said.

With his own children he was always an indulgent but caring parent. The prayers of parents for their children and children for their parents were always pleasing to God, he said. Children should be guided by good example and they should not be punished physically, he said. Fathers who beat their children were putting themselves alongside God and so were guilty of a kind of polytheism, believing they shared His attributes of being a true and absolute guide. Those who pushed their children unwillingly in a certain direction, believing they were masters of their children's destinies, were guilty of the same sin.

His sons and daughters remember Ahmad playing with them as small children, riding on his shoulders when he went for a walk, teasing them gently when they were in bed. He did not consider himself above nursing a fractious child.

"Look how brightly that star shines," a follower heard him say to his son Mahmood late one night when the child could not sleep.

"Father, I want to go to that star," the child replied.

The follower heard him remark to his wife, "I devised a way to distract him, but he has found it another cause for crying." He guided them, too, to have respect for God's other creatures. When Mahmood, as a little boy, tried to, catch sparrows by shutting the door of the mosque, he told him, "No one catches the little sparrows of his own abode. One who has no compassion has no faith."

And when Mahmood was older and went out shooting and returned with a parrot Ahmad told him, "It is flesh so, morally, it is not forbidden to eat it. But God has not created all birds for eating. Some beautiful birds are there for us to see and enjoy while other birds are gifted by nature to delight us with their song."

He took a constant interest in their education. When Mahmood arrived home one afternoon he told his younger brother Mian Bashir that their teacher had asked them to discuss which was more valuable – wealth or knowledge. Which did you think is more valuable? he asked.

Ahmad interrupted. "Neither," he said. "It is the bountiful mercy of God alone which has real value and is worth seeking." On another occasion he said. "The wealth of this world, its kingdoms and grandeur, are not to be envied. What one should truly envy is the act of prayer to God?

He was very certain that he needed prayers of support. He had asked his first wife to pray for him when they were still children. Now he asked Mahmood, when he was nine years old, to pray for him. He also asked other children to pray for him.

He instilled in his children great respect and love for their mother, recalling the saying of the Holy Prophet that paradise

lay under the feet of mothers. Once when his wife and her mother had a disagreement and were both in tears, he took his wife and led her in front of her mother where she bowed her head. Her mother immediately raised her daughter's head and embraced her. All annoyance was gone. Without having said a word Ahmad left the room and went upstairs.

When his eldest daughter Ismat fell ill he nursed her night after night. She died. Later his youngest son died. After he had told people of their death he never again spoke about them in public. His followers knew he grieved deeply.

Ahmad was exceedingly conscious of his duty as a husband. He told his followers, "Your wives are the first witnesses of your moral and spiritual calibre and your relationship between you and God. A man who is not honourable and kind to his wife, how can he possibly be good to other people? You must first of all be good to your wives."

And to a friend whose wife had died he wrote with feeling, "marriage is such a bond of human relationship that one is unable to be away from one's wife for more than a few weeks. Husband and wife are so much together, share so much of each other, that they become part of each other. With the blessings of marital relationship, worldly worries and trials are forgotten. The impressions and memories of marriage are so deep that, when one's wife dies, one cannot remember this relationship without tears. God has reminded us constantly about this mutual love and loyalty in marriage. It is the fountainhead of all human relationship."

Ahmad never interfered with his wife's control of the household. On a minor matter one of his followers said he disagreed with a decision she had made about an alteration to a building. Ahmad replied that it was a matter that was under her control and her decision should not be discussed.

When Abdul Karim complained of the attention he had to give his mother now that she was old and frail Ahmad

told him that he had a sacred duty to love and respect his mother. He recalled the saying of Muhammad that there were two especially unlucky people, the person who had the opportunity to fast in the month of Ramazan and did not do so, and so allowed the holy month to go past without his sins being forgiven. The other unlucky person was he whose parents were alive and who did not serve them with devotion and obedience.

Ahmad's constant admonition to his followers that they must be humble, truthful and generous resulted in many people joining the Community because they had been so impressed by the actions of one of his followers. The first sermon that a man called Umar Din heard stressed the duties owed to relatives. He felt it applied totally to himself and when he returned to his home in Kashmir he gave back to his brother the share in a property which had usurped.

A Hindu religious scholar wrote that Ahmad was always patient, kind and courteous, but he was a lion in debate. Said Ahmad, "I make it plain to all Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Aryas that I have no enemy in the world. I love mankind as a loving mother loves her children. I am only against their false beliefs which destroy truth."

Of the threats to kill him he was scornful. They came in unstamped, anonymous letters in nearly every post. He said, "My soul is not to be annihilated. Failure is not something I will ever have to face. I have the courage and truthfulness which can move mountains. I am not afraid of any trial. In a jungle I will push forward. In battle you will never see me turn back though you may see my head lying bloody in the dust. There is but one life but if I had a thousand lives it would be my wish to sacrifice each one of those lives for God".

He warned converts, "When you leave here people will tell you that you have given allegiance to a leper and a liar. Do not worry about this. Pray for them. God may guide

them as he has guided you. If you find they do not heed your call, then desist. If a person does not want to follow in my footsteps he can leave.

"I do not know what jungles full of thorns are in front of me. Those who are feeble cannot face these trials. But those who belong to me cannot separate from me, no matter what trials are set."

He added, "All the prophets have been abused. That is the inheritance of the Prophets so how can I be deprived of it? You must have such perfect control of anger that you have no capacity for anger. God enjoins patience and we must obey him. Understanding God's revelation leads to forbearance."

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

The White Minaret

Ahmad had never shirked controversy and now he found himself involved in debates all over India and, later on, in Britain, the United States of America and other countries. There were petty annoyances, too, and now also came the time of the first martyrs, executed in great cruelty because they would not renounce their belief in the prophethood of Ahmad.

As the Ahmadiyya Movement grew in esteem and influence throughout India and the world there were naturally those in Qadian whose jealousy grew apace. There had always been opposition from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh opponents in Qadian and at one time the abuse and annoyances inflicted on his followers and himself were so great that Ahmad considered leaving Qadian. A prophet has no honour in his own country and Ahmad was discovering the truth of this old saying.

When his followers tried to get as simple a thing as mud from the village pond to make bricks they were jostled and their loads upset. When Abdul Karim preached one Friday one of Ahmad's cousins, who hated him, had a band of drum and woodwind players at the ready. Each time Abdul Karin began speaking the band struck up. Abdul Karim was noted for the strength of his lungs, but even he was finally reduced to repeating a single verse from the Quran, "Woe unto you" repeatedly and again "woe unto you".

Ahmad preached patience and tolerance but one day, when he was away, one of his followers was set upon. This time there was no restraining influence and a street fight developed with the Sikhs pillaging the house of an Ahmadi. The police were called in and, as there was clear evidence of looting, the Sikhs were arrested, handcuffed and taken off to gaol.

Ahmad, who had severely admonished his followers for reacting to the provocation, was appealed to by Sikh leaders. He used his influence and the Sikh rioters were released.

The persecution continued and Ahmad again considered moving to a bigger town. Other prophets, including Muhammad, had been driven from their homes so he was not suffering any more than they had. Ahmad was immediately offered houses in various towns in the Punjab, but he finally decided to stay in Qadian.

One of the people who hated him most in Qadian was the widow of his brother Mirza Ghulam Qadir. Hers was a personal dislike, not a religious difference. It is always more difficult to accept the success of people you have looked down upon and she had always done so with Ahmad.

Early on he had stood in the way of her husband's sole possession of the family estate. She resented the fact that he had a right to half the income and could live on in the family house. The fact that he occupied only a small room and ate sparingly only seemed to increase her dislike.

After the death of her husband her hatred increased. They had never had any children and, as a result, Ahmad was now the chief of Qadian.

She and her husband had adopted in all but name Ahmad's two sons by his first marriage. His eldest son, Sultan Ahmad, had married the daughter of her brother, Mirza Nizam Din, who lived in an adjoining property. As a result of this marriage Sultan Ahmad was brought into a conspiracy against his father.

For many years Mirza Nizam Din had catcalled and abused any visitors to Ahmad that he happened to meet when they passed his house. Now he thought of a more grievous stratagem to harass Ahmad. It involved Sultan Ahmad.

In January, 1900, Mirza Nizam Din built an 8 ft wall across the lane that led to Ahmad's house. It meant that, from now on, anyone who came to see him or wanted to go to the mosque had to take a long and circuitous walk through Qadian's back streets. Most were unpaved and, in the rainy season, were ankle deep in mud. The route also took them past the houses of many people opposed to Ahmad and, as a result, the visitors were nearly always abused verbally, sometimes spattered with mud and occasionally physically assaulted.

The visitors to the mosque also did not have access to the well for water for the necessary ablutions before praying. Ahmad tried to reach some kind of agreement with his cousin about the wall, but this was rejected with laughter. Finally, reluctantly, he decided to take legal action. His son was on the other side.

When the documents of the case was deposited in court one of them appeared to confirm that Nizam Din owned the land on which the wall was built. Ahmad's lawyer counselled him to try to buy the land in order to settle the dispute as it appeared that he was likely to lose.

The proposal was turned down with contempt. Not only was he going to retain the wall across the lane, said Nizam Din, but he was, he boasted, going to build a wall right round Ahmad's house so that no one could get in.

He claimed victory too soon, however. A further search for documents revealed one with the name of Ahmad's father, Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, on it. It proved that Ahmad was an equal owner of the land.

The judge declared that the witnesses produced by Mirza Nizam Din were not reliable whereas those produced by

Ahmad were reliable. He, therefore, ordered that the wall be pulled down and that Mirza Nizam Din pay compensation for the trouble he had caused. The compensation was not paid and Ahmad's lawyers, without his knowledge, obtained a court order. A bailiff arrived at Qadian and when Nizam Din could not produce the money he started to sequester his goods. That night Mirza Nizam Din and his brother, who had also been involved, sent a message to Ahmad asking for mercy.

He had no money, he said. He would have to sell property in order to pay the court costs. Ahmad wrote back immediately saying that he had given orders for the summons to be withdrawn.

To his followers he explained, "We are not interested in such litigations. That's an occupation for people who have nothing else to do but worry about worldly gains. God has not sent me on such a mission. That is not my work. If my cousin meant some harm to me, it is not our job to repay him in the same coin."

There was to be a further legal action concerning the building of the white minaret at Qadian which, in a very special way, symbolised the coming of The Promised Messiah. The word manarah in Arabic – which is translated as minaret – means literally the time and place of light. It comes, it is said, from the first manarah or lighthouse built by Alexander The Great at Alexandria in Egypt.

White stands for purity, spotlessness and brilliance. There is a tradition in Islam which says that The Promised Messiah will descend by the White Minaret to the East of Damascus.

This, said Ahmad, should not be taken too literally. It meant that The Promised Messiah would come when there would be light throughout the world and distance could not keep things hidden from view. It meant also that the truth of Islam would tower up like a minaret and attain a height which would establish its superiority over all other faiths.

Ahmad nevertheless decided to fulfil this prophecy literally as well as spiritually. His aims were threefold: So that the muezzin could call out the time of prayers five times a day, proclaiming loudly that there is only one God and that He alone is worthy of worship.

Secondly bright lights would be fixed to the top of the minaret to dispel darkness and to show people that the age of heavenly light and spiritual advancement had arrived. And, thirdly, a clock which would strike the hours and indicate that here, at this very moment, the doors of Heaven were open and there was no need for a war with the sword in order to convert the world to Islam.

The opponents of Ahmad in Qadian united against his proposal. It would infringe their privacy. People in the minaret could peer into their houses. It was all very trivial, but tempers and emotions were aroused. When a local government official arrived in Qadian to take evidence of the most vociferous opponents of Ahmad was a man called Lala Budha Mal.

Pointing to him Ahmad said, "Ask him if there was ever an opportunity to do me an injury and he neglected it. Ask him also if there was ever an opportunity to do him good and I neglected it."

Lala Budha Mal hung his head and said nothing.

When the report on the dispute reached the appropriate authority it was decided that there was no reason at all why the minaret should not be built. Though the foundations were laid it was built after Ahmad's death. It is depicted today on all the publications of the Ahmadiyya Movement and on the flag which flies at their gatherings.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Islam looks to the West

These were the pinpricks of personal malice and envy. Now he was to enter into disputes that attracted attention worldwide. The minaret and the muzzein calling the faithful to prayer represented the old tradition of Islam. If he were to reach the millions of people who had not yet even heard mention of Islam then he had to utilise every modern means of communication.

Newspapers provided the ability to talk to people all over the world in their own languages. Already the printing presses in Qadian were turning out newspapers in several languages which were distributed throughout India. But the language of communication for the educated and administrative classes in India was already English. It transcended class and religion as well as all the old-fashioned state boundaries of rajahs and maharajahs.

Moreover, it opened the door to the Western world. With English, Ahmad realised, he could speak to the United States and to every country in the British empire. At that time it meant most of Africa, large portions of South East Asia and a toehold into China and South America. He, therefore, proposed the establishment of a journal in English that would appeal to thinking people.

And just as he had propelled Islam into public consciousness throughout India by demonstrating its beauties alongside those of other religions, he now did the same with

his new magazine. It was entitled The Review of Religions. Distribution began in Britain.

The Church Family, a journal published under the auspices of the Church of England, commented, "We should make no attempt to refute the literature published under the auspices of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, for he will create such a volume of literature against Christianity as will destroy the authority of the Bible altogether."

The Review of Religions has now been published continuously since 1902, making it one of the oldest religious journals in the world.

As he had refused to let any criticism of Islam go unanswered in India Ahmad now refused to let any criticism of Islam go unanswered in the United States or Great Britain. The first person to come to his attention was John Alexander Dowie. He was a Scot, born in Edinburgh, who had trained for the ministry and emigrated to Australia. There he gained a reputation for healing. In 1888 he moved to the United States and, in 1901, started building a city in Illinois which he called Zion City.

He was a bitter enemy of Islam. In his inappropriately named journal, Leaves of Healing, he wrote, "I think of the falsehood of Muhammad with great contempt". And he continued, "I warn the Christian people of America and Europe that Islam is not dead. Islam has great strength, though Islam and Muhammadanism must be destroyed."

Ahmad rose to the challenge. "We wish to point out respectfully that there is no need to subject millions of Muslims to destruction for the fulfilment of his purpose. There is a very easy way of determining whether Mr Dowie's God is true or our God. Mr Dowie need not repeatedly announce his prophecy of the destruction of all Muslims, but should keep me alone in his mind and should pray that, of the two of us, the one who is false may die before the

other...Mr Dowie believes in Jesus as God and I consider him a humble creature and a prophet.''

He continued, ''I have not been the first to propose such a prayer. It is Mr Dowie who, through his announcements, has put himself in that position. Observing this, God, Who is jealous, has urged me towards this confrontation. It should be remembered that I am not just an average citizen of this country. I am The Promised Messiah, who is awaited by Mr Dowie. The only difference is that Mr Dowie says The Promised Messiah will appear within 25 years, and I proclaim that he has appeared already and that I am that person. Hundreds of Signs have appeared in my support in the earth and from Heaven. My Community numbers a hundred thousand and is rapidly increasing.''

Mr Dowie was aged 56 at that time. Ahmad was 10 years older and in poor health because he suffered from diabetes, amoibic, dysentery, migraine and had a blood deficiency, His life did not depend upon the state of his health, however, Ahmad said, but on the command of God.

He concluded, ''If instead of the destruction of all the Muslims Mr Dowie's purpose can be served by my death alone, he will have established a great sign, in consequence of which millions of people will acknowledge the son of Mary as God.

''The truth is that Jesus, son of Mary, is from me and I am from God. Blessed is he who recognises me and most unfortunate is he from whose eyes I am hidden.''

The Promised Messiah's challenge received great publicity throughout the United States. The Argonaut of San Francisco, then a newspaper with a considerable circulation, commented that Ahmad had given a challenge that would be difficult to ignore. In so many words he had said, ''Mr Dowie and I should each pray that whoever is false, God should take him away in the life time of the other. The

one whose prayer is heard shall be considered from the true God."

"This indeed is a most reasonable and just position," concluded the Argonaut.

Dowie did not accept the challenge. Instead he prayed publicly, "I pray to God that Islam should soon disappear from the world. O god, accept this prayer of mine. O God, destroy Islam."

It was Dowie who was destroyed, however. His health deteriorated. He encountered financial difficulties. In 1905 he suffered a stroke and had to move first to Jamaica and then Mexico in search of a warmer climate. The affairs of Zion City were turned over to a nominee who turned against him. His wife and children deserted him and he was charged with a number of illicit and immoral practices. He died a miserable death on March 9th, 1907.

Some comments by American newspapers were:

> "Ahmad and his adherents may be pardoned for taking some credit for the accuracy with which the prophecy was fulfilled."
>
> "The Qadian man predicted that if Dowie accepted the challenge he would leave this world before his eyes with great sorrow and torment. If Dowie declined, the end would only be deferred; death awaited him just the same and calamity would soon overtake Zion. That was the grand prophecy: Zion would fall and Dowie would die before Ahmad."
>
> Dowie died a miserable death with Zion City torn and frayed by internal dissensions."
>
> The biggest headline was in a Boston newspaper: GREAT IS MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD, THE MESSIAH.

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

The First Martyrs

In Islamic countries, however, those who had accepted Ahmad as The Promised Messiah and refused to renounce their allegiance, even under torture, were to suffer far more violent deaths.

The first was an Afghan divine called Abdur Rahman. He was a follower of that Afghan nobleman Sahibzada Syed Abdul Latif, who had wanted to assault Ahmad's detractor in the mosque at Qadian. Sahibzada Latif had been a representative of the King of Afghanistan on the Durand Commission which settled the boundaries between India and Afghanistan. During their meetings one of the British delegation presented Sahibzada Latif with a book by Ahmad.

Latif was so impressed that he sent to Qadian for other books. Finally he sent his covenant of allegiance by the hands of Abdur Rahman. On his return to Afghanistan Abdur Rahman started preaching the news of the arrival of The Promised Messiah. On the orders of the King he was arrested. In 1901 he was strangled in his cell, thus becoming the first martyr.

A year later Sahibzada Latif decided to make a pilgrimage to certain holy places in Arabia. He did not include Qadian in his stated itinerary, but as soon as he was across the frontier he headed for Qadian. He was so impressed with the teachings of Ahmad and the growth of the Ahmadiyya Community that he stayed on in Qadian for several months. When, in the end, he had to return to Afghanistan he did so with a heavy heart.

He and Ahmad had become firm friends and their parting was filled with sorrow. Ahmad, who accompanied him on foot for the first three miles, said afterwards, "I perceived that he was as full of love for me as a crystal phial filled with perfume. It seemed to me that his heart was as illumined as was his countenance."

Sahibzada Latif believed that he was returning to his death. In a revelation he had received the message, "Offer your head! Offer your head!"

To Ahmad he said, "I have a foreboding that my end is near. I may not be so fortunate to ever see your holy face again." While still on British territory he wrote to the chief of police in Kabul explaining why he had not been able to proceed on the pilgrimage he had intended and asking if the King would allow him to come to Kabul to pay his respects. He was told to go directly to Kabul.

On his way to Kabul, however, Sahibzada Latif stopped at his home. Not long afterwards he was arrested by a troop of the King's soldiers and taken to Kabul under guard. There, fettered hand and foot, he was thrust into a cell in the main citadel in the city.

The King, who knew him and his family well, was reluctant to have him put to death – which was the penalty for all Muslims in Afghanistan who renounced Islam. Every few weeks he offered Sahibzada Latif his freedom, his lands and the return of all his previous dignities and honours if he would renounce his covenant to The Promised Messiah.

Sahibzada Latif sent back the reply that he was an intelligent and knowledgeable person and equipped by God with sufficient intelligence to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood. He was convinced, after months of study, that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was The Promised Messiah. He realised, he said, that he was putting his life in danger and inviting the ruin of his family by making this statement,

but he held his faith above all worldly comforts and considerations.

After four month Sahibzada Latif was taken before the king and told that his patience was exhausted. If he publicly repudiated the teaching of The Promised Messiah he could still save his life and property. If he did not then he would die.

Sahibzada Latif replied that it was not possible for him to deny the truth. Any torture inflicted upon him in this world could only end with his death, but if he denied The Promised Messiah then his torment would be everlasting. He urged that the divines who were opposed to him should enter into a public discussion and that if the arguments in support of his beliefs were justly refuted then he should be condemned and punished.

The King approved of this suggestion and eight divines were selected to enter into a debate with him. The debate was held in the largest mosque in Kabul. There was a huge crowd of spectators but nothing was said as the exchange of views and comments and references were all carried out in writing.

The debate started at 7 a.m. and finished at 3 p.m. The chains and fetters were removed from Sahibzada Latif so that he could write but eight guards with drawn swords stood round him all the time. At the end of the written discussions Sahibzada Latif was asked: If Ahmad was The Promised Messiah what then did he think of the second coming of Jesus?

He replied that Jesus had died and could therefore never appear again. The Quran proclaimed his death and he believed the Quran.

At this the divines burst out with furious denunciations. There was now no doubt that he was an infidel. He had renounced the faith of Islam. They, therefore, prepared the formal declaration of his apostasy and he was returned to his cell burdened once again with heavy chains and fetters.

The declaration was delivered to the King who pronounced sentence of death. The next morning Sahibzada Latif was taken in chains to an army barracks where a large crowd was already gathered. When the King arrived he told him, "You have been declared an apostate. Will you now repent or will you submit to the penalty?"

Sahibzada Latif said that he could not repent of the truth and he would not lie to save his life. The King again urged him to repent, but Sahibzada Latif said he could not repent for he would not give up the truth. The King therefore wrote out the order for his execution by stoning. This was hung around his neck. A hole was bored through his nose and a rope inserted so that he could be led like an animal to the place of his execution.

Accompanied by a large, jeering mob and by the King, his courtiers, judges and divines, Sahibzada Latif was taken in chains and fetters to a field outside the city walls where a pit had been dug. He was made to stand in it and the pit was filled up until it was waist high. The King then addressed him once more. Even now, he said, if he repudiated The Promised Messiah he would be delivered from death. He urged him to have mercy on himself and mercy also on the members of his family who would be tainted, dishonoured and disinherited by his apostasy.

Once again Sahibzada Latif said that he could not abjure his faith in order to save his life or to protect his family. At this the divines shouted that there was no doubt that he was a traitor to Islam and that he must die.

The King therefore asked the chief judge to cast the first stone. The judge said that the King should do it as he was the sovereign. The King replied that the chief judge was the repository of the law and it was his sentence that was being carried out.

The chief judge then dismounted from his horse and picked up a stone which he aimed with great force at Sahibzada

Latif. It struck him full on the forehead and made him lower his head. The King then picked up a stone and flung it hard at Sahibzada Latif. Then each man in the crowd picked up a stone and aimed it at him until he was buried under a mound of stones.

The day of execution was July 14th, 1903.

Ahmad condemned the martyrdom of Sahibzada Latif with dramatic words. "O land of Afghanistan, bear witness that a grave offence has been committed in thee. O, unfortunate land, thou has fallen in the estimation of God in that this great tragedy was enacted in thee."

Even in the bitterness of that time Ahmad counselled moderation. Speaking of the martyrdom he said to the members of the Ahmadiyya Movement, "If you adhere to truth and faith, angels will instruct you, heavenly comfort will descend upon you and you will be helped by the Holy Spirit. God will be with you at every step and no one will be able to overcome you. Await the grace of God steadfastly. Listen to abuse and keep silent. Endure being beaten and be steadfast. As far as possible do not resist evil, so that you may be accounted acceptable in Heaven."

And he promised, "Harken, all ye people. This is a prophecy of Him Who had created heaven and earth. He will spread this Community of His in all contries and will make it supreme over all, through reason and arguments. The days are coming, indeed they are near, when this will be the only religion which will be held in honour. God will bestow extraordinary blessings upon this religion and Movement. He will frustrate everyone who seeks to destroy it. This supremacy will last until Judgement Day."

He reminded them that no one would descend from Heaven because Jesus was dead. As the centuries passed and still Jesus did not appear people would abandon the belief that he was still alive. Then there will be only one religion that will prevail in the world and only one leader.

"I have come only to sow the seed, which has been sown by my hand. Now it will sprout and grow and flourish and no one can arrest its growth," he said.

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

The Resurgence of Islam

In 1901 Ahmad celebrated his sixty-sixth birthday. Physically he hardly appeared to have changed from when he was fifty. His skin was smooth without a wrinkle on his face or a line on his forehead. His hair, silver-white since shortly after his fiftieth birthday, gave him a venerable appearance, but this was belied by his physical agility. He still walked several miles a day, sometimes four or five and occasionally seven. And for a short time he also took up Indian clubs to keep his body fit and active.

He did not lessen his work load. His son Mahmood – who was to become his Second Successor – remembered that when he was working on a book he sometimes would not sleep. "Quite often I would see him busy and I would go to bed. When I woke I would still find him writing and he would continue all through the day." Very often, said Mahmood, he would forget to eat unless he was interrupted and told it was mealtime.

His eldest daughter had her memories, too. "He had absolute confidence and unshakeable faith in his destiny and spiritual appointment. There was an absolute feeling of certitude in his objectives and undertakings. The more faith he had in his mission the more responsibility and passion he displayed in his task."

So, when one of his followers declared that he had never directly claimed to be a prophet, Ahmad felt himself forced to reveal what God had told him.

"The truth is that the holy word that descends upon me contains the words 'messenger', 'messsage-bearer' and 'prophet'" he said.

He continued, "If the Holy Prophet is the Seal of the Prophets, then how, it is contended, can a prophet appear after him? The answer is that all the windows to prophethood are sealed except the window of righteous obedience, which is the spirit of complete immersion in the love of the Holy Prophet.

"Therefore, those who come to God through this window are clothed in a reflex manner with the mantle of Muhammadan prophethood...he is not drawing on himself, but draws on the fountain of the Holy Prophet. My prophethood and messengership are due to being Muhammad and Ahmad and not due to myself. This name I was granted on account of my immersion in the prophet."

He added later, "I swear by God, in whose hands lies my life, that He has sent me and He had named me a Prophet...my early belief was that I was nothing compared to the Messiah, son of Mary, he being a prophet and one of the favourites of God...but afterwards, as God's revelation descended upon me like rain, it undermined this belief and I was openly given the title of prophet – in one aspect as 'prophet' and in the other aspect as 'follower'."

The essential qualification for prophethood, he explained, was an abundance of divine revelation and a great knowledge of the unknown. In his own time and later, Ahmadis have emphasised that this claim to prophethood in no way lessens the supreme position of Muhammad.

After all, it has been asked, what is prophethood?

The answer given is that it is a high spiritual position elevating a man to a point where he is granted abundance of divine communion and knowledge of future events and is named a Messenger of God.

This does not detract, it is argued, from the position of Muhammad. It is a misunderstanding, the argument continues, of the meaning of the word ''prophethood''. A prophet does not need to bring a new law nor need he be independent of all the prophets who have gone before.

The advent of the Promised Messiah, it was, therefore, argued, had given Muslims good ground to exult for it had proved that Muhammad did not come to restrict the blessings of God, but rather to throw open wide the gates of His mercy and to show that, for all men and all nations, every kind of bounty was within reach.

Ahmad's unequivocal statement that he was a Prophet of God was followed shortly by a decision to call his mission ''The Ahmadiyya Movement In Islam''. Until now there had been no legal distinction between the followers of Ahmad and other Muslims. In 1901, however, a national census was being prepared and the question arose as to how the Ahmadis should distinguish themselves from other Islamic sects.

Ahmad declared that from reading the Quran it was apparent that Muhammad would be granted two manifestations. One was of majesty, which took place through his own person under the name Muhammad. The second manifestation of Muhammad would be one of beauty and this would take place through a reflection of himself under the name Ahmad. That was what was meant by reflex prophethood.

Those who knew Ahmad at this stage of this life remembered his ''personal magnetism''. They spoke of his moral and spiritual influence and of his recognisable goodness. Even those who were only associated with him for a few days were to recall this as the most beautiful and uplifting period of their lives. His opponents categorised this personal charm as ''magic'' and warned people against visiting him in Qadian lest they fall under his spell.

Ahmad had written of Muhammad, "O Seeker after truth, if thou seekest an argument for the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad, then fall in love with him. Muhammad is his own argument."

This argument can be applied equally forcefully to Ahmad himself. Hundreds, then thosuands, accepted him on sight, saying, "This is not the face of an imposter. This is The Promised Messiah".

Another great reason for the increase in numbers of the Ahmadiyya Community was the influence of the signs, miracles and other revelations which Ahmad declared God had vouchsafed to him. The first of these were tidings about individuals – friends and opponents alike – and about nations. These strengthened the faith of the people.

Prophecies, said Ahmad, consisted of signs of knowledge and power, the two pillars on which rests the Dominion of God. They were not necessarily immediately understandable. They did not shed a bright light which could be compared to midday brightness. If such were the case, said Ahmad, faith would be fruitless and no one would merit any reward for such faith.

Instead Ahmad compared them to the moonlight available on a cloudy night whereby those who were observant could easily find their way, but those who were weak of sight were left with room for doubt.

Many of his new converts spoke also of Ahmad's ability to help them in time of trouble by direct prayers to God. They wrote to him in their thousands and Ahmad mentioned them in his prayers. Ahmad declared that as God had appointed him The Promised Messiah with the special task of the reformation of mankind, God therefore gave a special hearing to his prayers.

When plague was ravaging India one person heard him praying. "There was such pain and heart-burning in it that the listener's heart would melt," he said afterwards.

His access to God did not mean that all his prayers for mankind were heard in all circumstances, said Ahmad, but most often they were.

Yet another reason for Ahmad's continuing success was his actual continuing success. The Muslim divines preached against him. The Hindus denounced him. So did the Christian missionaries. They had money, position and power. But they were never able to silence him.

He was always ready to debate, to put his beliefs before the people and let them judge. His opponents were not so ready and the Christians were absolutely adamant that they would not debate with him.

When he was questioned why this was so Ahmad replied, "God never favours the wicked with his support. He never lets down his good servants".

But, undoubtedly, the most powerful and urgent reason for the success of his mission was the picture he drew of Islam and the effect of his words and his life or the lives of his followers. The Quran was an inexhaustible spring of holy wisdom, said Ahmad. It was quite wrong to think that the knowledge of the Quran was now complete and that the commentaries of learned men of earlier generations represented the last word. Just as the physical world of the earth and the sea and the air yielded new treasures to every age so the Quran yielded spiritual treasures according to the requirements of every age.

He added that though the law had been made perfect the development and growth of Quranic knowledge would continue and this constituted one of its great miracles.

One of his followers wrote that Ahmad's explications "presented the beauty and perfections of the Holy Quran in the full glory of open daylight". They were "pearls of purest water" said another disciple.

Those who joined the Community had to stand by the vows they had made. If they did not, they were no longer con-

sidered members. The result was that there were no casual or lackadaisical Ahmadis.

Said one commentator, "When people saw an irreligious type of person, who had formerly ridiculed the teachings of Islam, suddenly become pious, God-fearing and an ardent follower of the faith, loving its teachings and adopting them in daily life, and seeking delight in the service of Islam, they felt in their heart that such a conversion could not be the result of a faith that was mistaken".

Those who took the covenant of allegiance at Ahmad's hands said they felt it was the beginning of a new life.

His devotion to old friends, and old friends who had become enemies, never wavered. Muhammed Hussain was included in his prayers. He wrote of his despair that "the tree of mutual love nurtured in our childhood" had been uprooted. He added, "I can never forget the springtime of our friendship for the valley of my heart is not a desert nor strewn with rocks".

But when his devoted companion Abdul Karim died and people bewailed his loss and said they did not know how anyone could replace him, Ahmad rebuked them. "To believe that his passing will create a vacuum is to indulge in a form of idolatry. We should not idolise a person. If Almighty God takes an able person from us, he shall surely provide us with his successor."

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

Prophet of God

Whenever he now left Qadian Ahmad was besieged and special arrangements had to be made to protect him against the crush of well-wishers as well as against those who wished him ill. As the number of his followers grew so did the virulence of his detractors. And their virulence increased. If he were to die, it would not be murder but justice, said the mob orators.

A woman taken on as a temporary cook by Ahmad's wife when they were staying in Delhi told her, unaware of who she was, "A man has come to Delhi who claims he is The Promised Messiah. Our leaders say we must kill him. My son yesterday took a knife and went to kill him. He could not get near enough though he made several attempts. He got to the house, but the doors were all locked."

Normally, however, armed police patrolled the streets around any house in which he was staying. His opponents had to be content with meetings and demonstrations as near to the house as the police would allow.

In January, 1903, Ahmad had to appear in a legal case in Jehlum, a town of some 20,000 people which is 150 miles from Qadian. It was known that he was coming and the result was a crowd of many thousands gathered to meet him at the railway station. Many had come in from the surrounding districts, some of their own free will; others invited to demonstrate against Ahmad by Muslim divines.

The legal case was adjourned, but the journey was a success for Ahmad for it is recorded that nearly one thousand people

took the covenant of allegiance. Many of them were from the people brought in to demonstrate against him.

In Lahore much the same thing happened. His opponents drummed up opposition to him which alerted people to the fact that he was within easy travelling distance. And though many came to mock, some always stayed behind to become converts. A public meeting was arranged in Lahore where 7,000 people turned up. The commotion, threats and verbal haranguing that went on before the meeting took place was so great that the civil authorities called for extra police and, during the meeting, the streets were patrolled by police with drawn swords.

At Sialkot, where he had once been a lowly clerk, the railway station was jammed solid with people and the police had difficulty in clearing a way for the carriage that was to take him the mile-long journey to the house where he was to stay. Crowds thronged the route, climbing on buildings and carts and trees in order to get a glimpse of him.

And this was despite a prohibition from Muslim divines who, learning from their experience at Jehlum, had told people not to go near him. When he held a public meeting the Muslim divines stationed groups of muscular men near the entrances to dissuade people from going in to listen to him.

Naturally not all in the crowds were wellwishers. A man called Mian Hayat recalled that he was at school at that time. "Our teacher told us to gather dirt and pebbles and took us up on the roof of a house where we could throw them at him. So we did as we were told."

Once, when he was staying in Lahore, a Muslim divine arrived outside his house and started to harangue the people who were gathered there. His denunciation of Ahmad as an apostate was couched in filthy words. When he was moved on by the police for obstructing the highway he crossed the road and climbed a tree and continued his harangue from there.

Some Ahmadis wished to silence him but Ahmad forbade them. "Let him have his say and do not answer him." The crowd appreciated the treetop eminence of the Muslim divine and called him...Maulvi Tahlywala.

The legal case which had been adjourned at Jehlum was one of many which crowded in on Ahmad as the Community grew. Though the life-long opposition by Muhammad Hussain had diminished, others had taken his place. The one begun at Jehlum was by a man called Karam Din who claimed that he had been libelled by Ahmad.

Though it was a fairly simple libel action it was to drag on for two years because members of the militant Arya Samaj Hindu sect had suborned the magistrate. He was a Hindu. At a private meeting the magistrate was told, "He is a prey in your hand. You can wring his neck like a bird if you wish. If you let him go you will be an enemy of your people."

The magistrate had no qualms about their request. He had already decided that he would make life as difficult as possible for Ahmad – and for anybody who gave evidence on his behalf. He mentioned that he had the power to hold people in prison without any question of bail.

Fortunately for Ahmad the discussion was overheard by the legal clerk of the district magistrate who revealed the plot to Ahmad's lawyer. The clerk was a Muslim, though not an Ahmadi, but he did not wish to see a chieftain of the Punjab dishonoured by a Hindu plot.

The conversation was disclosed to Ahmad when he was lying ill in a room at Gurdaspur. He raised himself to a half-sitting position on the charpoy where he was lying. "I – a prey! I am no prey I am a lion. I am the Lion of God. Let these people lay their hands on the Lion of God and see what happens." His face suffused with blood despite the pallor of his illness and his voice was so loud that people outside the room stopped and stared. He repeated the phrase "Lion of God" several times.

After a little time his colour subsided and he held out his hands. "What can I do?" he asked. "I have many times submitted to God that I am prepared to wear the bangles of steel on my wrists but He tells me every time, 'I will not let that happen. I am standing guard over thee and no one dare lay his hands on thee'."

Suddenly he put his head between his knees and vomited blood. A doctor was called who happened to be British. After an examination he told Ahmad's companions that Ahmad must rest. To vomit blood when one was old was dangerous.

He signed a medical certificate saying that Ahmad was too ill to attend court for the next month. The magistrate was incensed that Ahmad did not appear. He summoned the doctor before him to verify that the medical certificate was not a forgery. Then he formally framed charges against Ahmad.

And so the case dragged on, with adjournment after adjournment. Then the magistrate was demoted and transferred because of another case. The case started before another magistrate. He was also a Hindu. He refused to allow Ahmad the use of a chair, which he was entitled to because of his rank as a chieftain of the Punjab apart from his age, and even refused permission for him to drink some water during the proceedings.

Finally he announced that he would give his judgement on a certain day. Then he changed the day to a Saturday. Ahmad's lawyers discovered that his intention was to announce a heavy fine just before the court closed on Saturday afternoon. Ahmad would not be immediately able to pay and would therefore have to spend the rest of the weekend in gaol.

Just before the court closed he summoned Ahmad before him and gave the police orders not to permit anyone to enter the courtroom. But Ahmad's lawyer brushed past the police guard, saying it was illegal to try to stop him entering the

court as he was Ahmad's counsel. He entered just as the magistrate was imposing a swingeing fine of 500 rupees. Forewarned, the lawyer immediately produced the money and put it on the table in front of the magistrate and asked him to take formal notice of the fact that the fine had been paid.

The magistrate tried to protest, then realised that he had been outmanoeuvred and accepted the fine.

Ahmad had previously revealed that, though he would be found guilty by the magistrate, God had told him that the sentence would be set aside by a higher legal court.

And so it was. His lawyers took the case to the court of appeal which overturned the magistrate's decision and had the fine returned. There had been no libel, the judge said, just a plain statement of fact which had been totally justified in the circumstances. He added that he found it very strange that such a minor case had dragged on for so many years with so many hearings.

In April, 1908, Ahmad was aged 73. He still ate sparingly. He still walked every day whenever possible. He still observed all the five daily prayers, rising unfailingly at 2 o'clock in the morning for Tahujjud prayer. He still studied the Quran assiduously for hours and was in constant demand by officials of various kinds dealing with the affairs of the Community in various parts of the world. But he knew he was getting old.

His wife, who had been feeling unwell for some time, asked him to accompany her to Lahore to visit a doctor. He agreed, but on the night before they had to leave he had a revelation which he revealed to various people. It was: ''Feel not secure at this time''. Ahmad, therefore, postponed his departure because his younger son was ill in bed at this time and he was not sure of the meaning of the revelation. The next day his son was much better and Ahmad therefore left for Lahore.

There, in the middle of May, he received another revelation: "Departure, again departure. God will take up all thy burden".

In Lahore, while his wife was receiving medical treatment, he arranged to give a lecture to the notables of the city at a private dinner. Very few, he realised, had ever heard him speak because they were unlikely to attend a public meeting. The night before he was due to speak he received another revelation. "Rely not on this unstable life," he was told.

This revelation, he realised, pointed to his approaching death, but he worked on at his usual tempo and, at the meeting of notables, he spoke for two hours.

He told them, "I claim that God has sent me for the reform of the current widespread corruption. I cannot conceal the fact that God speaks to me and honours me frequently with His converse. This amounts to prophethood, but I do not enjoy this honour in my own right. In a way this is a verbal contention. Continuous and frequent receipt of revelation is called prophethood."

He recalled the words of Ayesha, the wife of Muhammad when she said, "Say 'He is the Seal of the Prophets', but do not say, 'There will be no prophet after him'."

He continued, "If there is no longer any prophethood in Islam, then be sure that Islam has also died like other religions, and does not possess any distinctive sign."

Though many of his listeners were opposed to him there was marked respect for the profundity of his Islamic knowledge and his obvious deep sincerity.

Despite this apparently clear statement a newspaper reported that he had repudiated his claim to prophethood. He, thereupon, issued a fuller statement. He was not a prophet who brought a new law or in any way had abrogated the law of Islam, he declared. "I am not a prophet in the sense that I separate myself from Islam, or abrogate any

commandment of Islam. I bear the yoke of the Holy Quran and no one dare abrogate a single word or vowel point of the Holy Quran.''

And once again he reaffirmed that God spoke to him frequently, disclosed hidden things to him, informed him about future events and that he enjoyed a special nearness to God. ''Thus I am a prophet by divine command and it would be a sin on my part to deny it and I shall continue to be firmly established as a prophet till I pass away from this world.''

Before he issued that statement he had told his immediate disciples and family that death was fast approaching for he had received yet another revelation.

''Departure, departure. Death is at hand,'' he was told.

This revelation left no room for misunderstanding and his wife proposed immediately that they should return to Qadian. He answered that they would now only return when God took them there.

He continued working on his new book, entitled *A Message Of Peace,* which proposed a scheme whereby Hindus and Muslims would show respect for the holy men of each other's religions, recognising that they were all children of one God and inhabitants of one country so they should be able to live in peace. He finished this manuscript on May 25th, handed it over to a secretary and after late afternoon prayers, started out on his daily walk. A horse-drawn taxi took him out of the city so that he could walk more freely in the country. He returned within the hour and went to bed at the normal time.

He felt ill during the night and doctors were called. They realised that he was seriously ill. He lapsed in and out of consciousness. Early in the morning he asked, 'Is it prayer-time?'' and one of his followers, standing beside his bed, replied, ''Yes Sir, it is''.

He then made the signs of symbolic ablutions and started praying. He lost consciousness in the middle of the prayer,

but then recovered and started again, finishing it slowly. He was then semi-conscious, but whenever he recovered consciousness he could be heard repeating, "O God, My beloved God".

At 10.30 in the morning it seemed to those around him that they heard him breath deeply twice. Then he died.

The unthinking of those who had opposed him in life rejoiced in his death and within half an hour the street outside the house was crowded with the riff-raff of Lahore. They chanted and shouted, capered and danced and held mock funeral processions. Inside the house the body of Ahmad was washed, wrapped in winding sheets and at three o'clock that afternoon funeral prayers were held in the courtyard of the house.

When certain women of the household began to bewail their loss his widow counselled them to control their grief. To her children she said, "Do not imagine that your father has left you only an empty house. He has laid up for you a great treasure of prayers in Heaven, which will continue to yield its beneficence to you all in time to come."

That night his coffin was carried on the shoulders of his followers to the station to catch the evening train for Batala. They were pelted with stones as they walked. From Batala his followers carried his coffin for 11 miles throughout the night until they reached Qadian at nine o'clock the following morning. Twelve hundred Ahmadis, alerted by telegrams, reached Qadian by midday. Many of them had thought the telegrams a cruel jest by their opponents, but had come to Qadian to be reassured. When they filed into the rose garden adjoining the small cemetery of the mosque and saw the body of their leader lying there in the winding sheets of the grave, their grief knew no bounds.

In mid-afternoon there was a meeting of all the members of the Ahmaddiyya Community present in Qadian and

Nurud Din, who had taken the first covenant of allegiance to Ahmad 19 years ago in Ludhianna, was unanimously elected his first successor. Nurud Din sat on a scrap of carpet under a mango tree in the rose garden and one by one, in exactly the same way as Ahmad had done, accepted their right hand and their pledge of allegiance to obey him in all godly things as to the conduct of their lives.

When the last pledge of allegiance had been given and accepted the First Successor led the funeral prayers and at six o'clock the body of Ahmad was buried in the small cemetery. Already some of those who had been among his first 313 Companions were buried there. In the years that followed his other Companions were to lie there.

In contrast to the vulgar delight of the mob who had danced outside his house on news of his death, the worldwide obituaries painted a different picture. The daily paper in Delhi commented: "He changed entirely the structure of polemics and laid the foundations of new literature in India...His vigorous literature has a novel grandeur...and a study of some of his writings transports the reader to a state of ecstasy."

A newspaper in Lahore said that, though the writer did not believe Ahmad was The Promised Messiah, there was no doubt that he "was an exceedingly holy and exalted leader who had a force of piety that conquered even the hardest hearts. He was a well-informed scholar, a reformer of great resolve who, set an example of pious life...his guidance and leadership had a true messianic quality for the spiritually dead".

His constant opponents, the newspapers of the Hindu Arya Samaj sect, commented that while his name brought back memories of bitter disputes it was true to say that his ideas about Islam were much more liberal than those of most Muslims and that he resembled Muhammad in the quality of perseverance. "He stuck to it to his last breath and never wavered in the slightest degree."

The Times of London, in a long obituary covering his teachings, said that many men of high standing and good education were numbered among his followers. The writer recalled the words of one of his Christian opponents. He was, he said, "venerable in appearance, magnetic in personality and active in intellect".

In 1989, one hundred years after Ahmad took the first covenant of allegiance, millions of people the world over recognise him as the Messenger of God prophesied down through the ages in all the great religions of the world – The Promised Messiah.

INDEX

14th century of Islam 65
313 Companions 110

Abdul Hamid 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111
Abdul Karim 90, 95, 96, 133, 143, 146, 149, 170
Abdulla Athim 82
Abdullah Athim 103
Abdur Rahman 159
Abraham 9
Abu Huraira 73
Adam 27
Afghanistan 70, 71, 160, 163
Afghan 149, 159
Africa 155
Ahmad's 167
Ahmaddiyya Community 62, 178
Ahmadi xii, 110, 150
Ahmadis 166, 167, 170, 173
Ahmadiyya Community 104, 111, 159, 168
Ahmadiyya Movement In Islam, The xi, 2, 95, 96, 126, 127, 129, 149, 153, 163, 167
Ahmad 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 100, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 116, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 153, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 163, 165, 167, 168, 169, 171, 173, 174, 175, 178, 179,
Aihim 94
Alexander The Great 152
Alexandria 152
Ali, son-in-law 47
Allied Armies 96
American Mission Press 81
American Mission 108
American methodists 80
American United Presbyterian Church 80
American 106
Amir Taimur 13
Amritsar 80, 81, 104, 106, 107, 108, 122
anti-Christ 83, 141
Arabic 17, 114
Aramaic 71
Argonaut 157, 158
Arjan Das 122
Arya Gazette 98
Arya Hindu 87
Arya Samaj Hindu 38, 83, 98, 173
Arya Samaj Hindus 105
Arya Samaj 40, 101, 105, 120
Aryas 147
Asaph 70
Atheism 53
Athim, Mr 83, 132
Australia 156
Ayesha 176

Baba Nanak 120, 122, 123
Bani Israel 71
Barabbas 117
Batala 23, 30, 36, 37, 52, 105, 107, 178
Beas 14, 60
Begowal 14
Bengal 97
Bhavisya-ma-purana 71
Bhera 63
Bible 20, 31, 33, 37, 67, 68, 71, 73, 79, 82, 87, 121
Bishop of Lahore 113, 117,
Bishop 114, 115, 116
Braheen Ahmadiyya 40, 52, 53, 54, 57, 59, 98
Braheen-i-Ahmadiyya 51, 65
Brahmo Samaj 53
Britain 27, 96, 149
British empire 155
British Government 97
British 15, 17, 18, 31, 39, 106, 119, 120, 174
Buddhism 8, 31, 38
Buddhist 94
Bukhari 20
Butler, Mr 27, 28

Champion 8
Chief Commissioner 111
chief of police 160
chief of Qadian 150
Chilla 59
China viii, 155
Chinese viii
Chiragh Bibi 30
Chola Sahib 122
Christianity 8, 9, 32, 53, 80, 83, 113, 114, 156
Christians 2, 4, 7, 9, 20, 26, 27, 34, 37, 38, 39, 53, 54, 66, 67, 68, 72, 73, 80, 81, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 94, 98, 99, 104, 105, 106, 113, 114, 115, 121, 129, 147, 156, 169, 180
Christ 69, 95, 117, 140
Church Family 156
Church Missionary Society's Medical Mission 80
Church of England 94, 156
Church of Scotland 80
Church 68
Civil and Military Gazette 91
Clark, Dr Henry Martyn 80, 81, 83, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111
Clark, Rev. Robert 81
cloak 122
CMS 81
Commander of the Star of India 111
Community 125, 139, 141, 157, 169, 173, 175
Companions 33, 90
Conference of Great Religions 88, 89
Coronation Durbar 97
credo of Islam 122
Cross 2, 69, 85
Crucifixion 69, 73
Curzon, Lord 97
crurifragium 68

Dala-i-lulkhairat 20
Dalhousie 21
Damascus 152
defendant 21
Delhi 36, 79, 97, 171, 179
Dera Baba Nanak 122
Diaspora 69
District Magistrate 76, 107
Douglas, Captain William 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111
Dowie, Mr 157, 158

Durand Commission 159
Durood and Wazaaif 34

eclipse 8
Eddison 127
Edinburgh 156
Egerton, Sir Robert 15
Egypt 152
Elijah 10, 67
Emperor of Persia 97
English Baptists 80
English 7, 114, 155,
Europe xii, 33
Eve 27

Faith 74
Fatima 47
Fazal Ahmad 19
Ferozepore 123
Ferozpore 98
First Successor 179
First World War 96
flag 153
Fottohul Ghaib 20
France 96

Galilee 3
gatherer 70
General Assembly xi
George V 97
Germany 31, 96
Ghaz-e-basar 29
Ghulam Ahmad 105
God xi, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 22, 34, 35, 37, 40, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 77, 79, , 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 93, 96, 98, 100, 101, 103, 110, 113, 114, 118, 119, 121, 122, 127, 129, 135, 138, 140, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 163, 165, 167, 169, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178
gramophone 127
Grantha Sahib 121,
Great Britain 156
Grey, Dr 106
Guide 67
Gura Har Sahai 123
Gurdaspur 13, 20, 39, 104, 122, 173
Guru Baba Nanak 123
Guru 122

Habi Bakhsh 37
Hafauz Mo'i-ud-Din 45
Hamid Ali 131, 138, 139
Hazrat 130
Heaven 73
Heavens 75
Hegira 7
Hell 83
Hima-il-Sharif 123
Him 127
Hindu Arya Samaj 54, 179
Hinduism 8, 31, 38, 121
Hindu 29, 38, 88, 94, 97, 101, 104, 106, 120, 121, 129, 147, 149, 173, 174
Hindus 9, 20, 26, 54, 85, 97, 98, 120, 121, 147, 177
His Lordship 116
Holy Bible 118
Holy Book 89
Holy Prophet Muhammad 57, 59
Holy Prophet 12, 46, 48, 54, 77, 99, 166
Holy Quran xii, 17, 40, 57, 89, 118, 142, 177
Holy War 2, 81
Hoshiarpur 60
Hurmat Bibi 19, 55

Hyderabad 95
hydrophobia 96

Illinois 156
Ilzami 37, 38
imposter 75
India 2, 3, 17, 31, 32, 33, 70, 72, 80, 89, 95, 106, 109, 111, 116, 119, 134, 149, 155, 156, 159, 168, 179
Indian Christians 80
Indian Empire 111
Indian National Congress 97
Indian Review 91
Indians 97
Indonesia xii
Inner Meaning of the Bible, The 83
Iran 71
Isa 86
Isha-Masih 72
Islamic sects 167
Islam xi, xii, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 20, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 40, 52, 53, 54, 59, 61, 65, 66, 67, 74, 79, 80, 88, 89, 93, 95, 98, 113, 120, 121, 123, 126, 127, 129, 141, 152, 155, 156, 158, 160, 162, 169, 170, 177, 179
Islampur 13
Ismat 146
Israelite Messiah 65
Israel 69, 70, 71

Jacob 9
Jamaica 158
Jandiyala 80, 81
Jehlum 172, 173,
Jerusalem 70
Jesus Christ 66, 115
Jesus The Gatherer 3
Jesus xii, 2, 9, 10, 27, 59, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 81, 82, 85, 86, 104, 113, 117, 157, 161
Jews 117
John Alexander Dowie 156
John the Baptist 67, 74
John 69
Judaism 8
Judgement Day 163

Kabul 160, , 161
Kamal-ud-Din 88, 89, 90
Kanzul-Ummal 70
Kapurthala 35
Karam Din 173
Kasauli 95
Kashmir xii, 3, 70, 71, 147
Khadeejah 55
Khal'atul Honood 34
Khan Yar 71
King of Afghanistan 159
King, The 162, 163
Kursi Nashin 109

Lahore 13, 22, 24, 49, 79, 88, 90, 91, 98, 105, 117, 121, 140, 172, 175, 176, 178, 179
Lala Budha Mal 153
Latif 163
Le Marchand, Police Superintendent 107, 108
Leaves of Healing 156
Lefroy, Rt. Rev. G. A. 113
Lekh Ram 83, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103
Lion of God 173
Living Faith 118
Living Prophet, The 118
Ludhiana 3, 81
Ludhianna 63, 65, 66, 74, 99, 125

Macbeth 106
Maharajah 1, 14
Mahdi or Guide 65
Mahdi, The 7, 8, 10, 67, 73
Mahmood 131, 138, 145, 165
manarah 152
mantles 8
Mary 27, 73, 74, 86, 157, 166
Masih 70
Masnawi Maulana Rum 20
Matthew 69
Maulvi Nurud Din 65
Maya Hyat Bibi 172
Mecca 121
Medina 121
melancholia 46
Message of Peace, A 177
Messenger of God 122, 166
Messiah, The Promised xi, viii, 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 63, 65, 73, 74, 75, 76, 115, 117, 125, 152, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 166, 167, 168, 171, 179
Messiahship 117
Mexico 158
Mian Bashir 145
Mian Nizam Din 74
minaret 153, 155
Minto, Lord 97
miracles 95
Mirza Ahmad 117
Mirza Bashir Ahmad 125
Mirza Din Muhammad 43, 45, 46
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian 91
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad xi, 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 23, 115, 117, 156, 160
Mirza Ghulam Murtaza 7, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 35, 48
Mirza Ghulam Murtza 43
Mirza Ghulam Qadir 51, 150
Mirza Hadi Beg 13
Mirza Nizam Din 150, 151, 152
Mirza of Qadian 77
Mirza 14, 15, 19, 45, 117
Mirzan Ghulam Murtaza 151
Mirzapore 37
Mleechas 71, 72
Mogul 13, 14
Monazirahcf1 34
moon 8
Moses 9, 59, 67, 86
Mosques 14
muftis 9
Muhammad Hussain 34, 35, 36, 38, 74, 75, 76, 81, 83, 105, 109, 110, 111, 170, 173
Muhammadanism 156
Muhammad xi, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 20, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 44, 48, 53, 54, 55, 56, 62, 65, 67, 73, 74, 79, 83, 85, 91, 98, 100, 103, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 147, 150, 156, 167, 168, 176, 179
Muhammad Hussain 52
Muhammedan 166
Muslim xi, 15, 34, 40, 53, 67, 81, 87, 94, 95, 97, 99, 104, 106, 116, 117, 121, 123, 126, 129, 140, 141, 149, 169, 171, 172, 173
Muslims 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 26, 31, 32, 33, 37, 52, 54, 57, 61, 62, 66, 72, 73, 76, 77, 81, 86, 109, 113, 117, 120, 137, 147, 156, 157, 160, 177, 179

Nasibin 70
Nazareth 65
Nicholson, General 15
Nobel prize winner xi

Noor Afshan 98
North America xii
North American 8
Nudrud Din 179
Nurud Din 63, 138
Nusrat Jahan Begum 55

ointments 2
Old Persian 70
Old Testament 82

Pakistan xii, 2
Palestine 70
Pandit Lekh Ram 54, 98
Pandit Ram Bhaj Dutt 105
Passover 117
Pasteur Institute 96
Paul 70
Peacock Throne 97
Persia 70
Persian 17, 97, 114, 139
Peshawar 98
Pilate 117
plague 134, 168
plaintiff 21
Poland xii
Pontius Pilate 104
Prophet of God 53
Prophet Yuz Asaph 3
prophethood 176
Prophets 8, 9, 11, 73, 115, 148, 165
Punjab Muslim 117
Punjabi 139
Punjab xi, 3, 13, 14, 15, 70, 81, 109, 114, 126, 150, 174

Qadhi 13
Qadiani 77
Qadian 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 25, 29, 36, 41, 43, 49, 63, 74, 88, 95, 98, 106, 110, 111, 125, 126, 128, 134, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 158, 159, 167, 171, 177, 178
Quran Muslims 9
Quranic 127
Quran xii, 11, 12, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 48, 52, 53, 54, 68, 71, 73, 79, 86, 87, 98, 119, 122, 123, 136, 145, 149, 161, 169, 175

Raheem Bakhsh, Sheikh 38
Ramadhan 8
Ramazan 147
Ranjit Singh, Maharajah 14
Reformer of the Age 85
Reformer 65
Review of Religions, The 156
Russia 96
Russian xii

Safarus-sa-aadat 20
Sahibzada Abdul Latif 139
Sahibzada Latif 160, 161, 162, 63
Sahibzada Syed Abdul Latif 159
San Francisco 157
Sanskrit 71, 120
Satan 52
Saul 70
Secretary of State for India 97
Semitic 70, 71
Shakespeare 1, 106
Sher Ali 110
Shia 34
Sialkit 27, 29
Sialkot 25, 26, 30, 37, 55, 172
Sikh maharajah 15
Sikhism 31, 121
Sikhs 7, 13, 14, 15, 38, 40, 48, 94, 120, 121, 122, 149, 150

Sindh 81
Son of God 82
South America 155
South East Asia 155
Spain xii
Spectator 117
Srinagar 71
Sultan Ahmad 19, 41, 150, 151
sun 8
Suni 34
Sunnah 33
Sura Fatiha 21, 122
Sutta 71
Swami Dayanand 38, 40
Swami Shugan Chandra 88

Tahqiqi 37, 38
Taxila 71
Tazkikeratul Aulia 20
Teachings of Islam 91
The Innocent Prophet 113
The King 161
The Promised Messiah 82
The Times of London 180
Theosophical Notes 91
Thomas 69
Tibet 70
Tohfa-i-Hind 34
Tohfa-tul Honood 34
Tolstoy, Count Leo xi, 91
Torah 31
Trinity of God 121
Trinity 68, 82, 118

Umar Din 147
United Nations xi
United States of America 149
United States xii, 31, 33, 155, 56, 157
Unity 118
Untouchables 134
Urdu 17, 97, 114, 123

Vedas 87, 121
Viceroy of India 97
Victorian 127

Warner 11, 75

Yus Asaph 70
Yus 70
Yuyu 70

Zion City 58, 156